

AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED ATTRIBUTES
OF PUBLICS ON PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY USE AND EFFECTIVENESS

By

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By

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This work is dedicated to Dominique Andreas Werder, Vernon Wade Page, Nancy King Page, and Nicole King Page for their love, support, and unwavering belief that I could accomplish this task. They have made it possible for me to fulfill a dream that seemed, at times, very distant.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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This study examines the influence of attributes of publics on public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations. Specifically, this study attempted to replicate and extend previous research by examining how the attributes of problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, and goal compatibility are related to use of informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving strategies in organizations and the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving organizational goals.

A survey was administered to members of the Public Relations Society of America (n=403) using direct mail and Internet-based modes of administration. Results indicate that informative and persuasive strategies are used significantly more often than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies in the implementation of public relations campaigns. Findings support the hypothesis that perceived attributes of publics influence public relations strategy use in organizations. Problem recognition produced the

strongest univariate effect on strategy use. Mixed support was found for propositions related to the perceived attributes of publics most significant to use of informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving strategies.

In addition, results indicate that perceived attributes of publics are predictors of public relations strategy effectiveness. Goal compatibility was found to be the strongest predictor of effectiveness across strategies. Results also suggest that goal compatibility is related to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement; however, goal compatibility does not appear to influence the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics. Furthermore, support was found for the predictions of the situational theory of publics through indirect measurement of the independent and dependent variables.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, public relations has grown into an area of academic scholarship that is both multidisciplinary and theory driven. It is a discipline that draws from many areas of the social sciences, including mass and interpersonal communication, psychology, sociology, organizational behavior, and business management (Botan & Hazleton, 1989; Heath, 2001; J. E. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1989). This conceptual borrowing has provided scholars with much needed insight into how public relations is defined, how it functions in organizations, and how it contributes to society.

A review of the contents of the *Handbook of Public Relations* (Heath, 2001) supports the conclusion that public relations scholarship has expanded in both breadth and depth. It also signifies the growing commitment among scholars to develop discipline-specific public relations theory to further advance the field. Heath articulates this in the preface of the text when he concludes that, eventually, the discipline's "multidisciplinary nature will meld into a clearer definition of what constitutes the unique core of public relations" (2001, p. xiii).

In fact, public relations is a field that is still evolving and searching for its true identity, with many issues yet to be resolved (Cropp & Pincus, 2001). In Heath's words, "The discipline has come a long way. . . . But it has a long way to go" (2001, p. xiii). This suggests that limitations exist in our understanding of public relations that must be addressed before the discipline can realize its full potential for theory-based scholarship, practice, and pedagogy.

Context of the Problem

One important limitation that exists in our current understanding of public relations stems from the fact that the discipline has traditionally taken an organization-centered rather than a communication-centered approach in explaining public relations behavior. Public relations research has historically viewed the organization as the unit of analysis, describing public relations as a management function influenced primarily by factors related to the organization (J. E. Grunig, 1989a, 1992, 2001; J. E. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). According to Karlberg (1996), research conducted under this premise has conceptualized public relations as “a commercial management function—a means of influencing consumer value and behavior, of cultivating markets, of corporate image control, and of issues management” (p. 266). Consequently, a number of scholars have argued for more theory-driven research that examines public relations from a communication perspective (Botan & Hazleton, 1989; Botan & Soto, 1998; Hallahan, 2000a; Leitch & Neilson, 2001; Springston & Keyton, 2001; Pearson, 1990).

From a communication perspective, public relations behavior is best understood by examining it in relation to variables inherent to the communication process. According to Harris (1993), identifying communication as an interactive process is one of the most important additions to communication theory in the past 20 years. The widely recognized interactional model of communication defines it as a process of reciprocal message exchange between a source and a receiver. Each of the elements in the exchange—the source, the message, and the receiver—has impact on the outcome (Rothman, 1972). By accepting the importance of all variables in the eventual success or failure of the communication process, this approach is better able to explain the dynamic nature of communication (Harris, 1993).

In addition, the communication process is widely recognized by scholars as being situational (Harris, 1993). According to Littlejohn (1983), communication is constantly changing and shifting in response to a situation. Similarly, Spitzburg and Cupach (1984) stated that norms, rules, expectations, and conventions endemic to a particular situation govern the unfolding of communication behavior.

As a communication function, public relations is subject to the same assumptions as communication. Therefore, it should be examined as a dynamic process that is influenced by the situational interaction of source, message, and receiver variables.

A communication-centered view of public relations offers several advantages. According to Hazleton and Botan (1989), the primary advantage is that it allows application of metatheoretic, theoretic, and methodological tools from communication and other social sciences for understanding the public relations behavior of organizations. In addition, a communication perspective allows a more detailed examination of message and receiver variables—two elements of the public relations process that have been minimally explored in research.

The message variable in the public relations process has been largely overlooked by scholars. According to Hallahan (2000a), creating effective messages to reach strategically important publics is a critical function of public relations; yet, public relations theorists have failed to develop message strategies for communicating with publics (p. 464). Similarly, Springston and Keyton (2001) stated that, although scholars have described the need for delivering strategic messages concurrently to multiple publics, a theoretically grounded methodology for assessing and analyzing messages sent to publics has not been offered (p. 117).

Research concerning the influence of receiver variables on the public relations process is also sparse. Aside from the situational theory of publics, variables related to the public—the receiver of organizational messages—have received little attention, as noted by several public relations scholars. In 1992, Moffitt stated that one of the “central, but often neglected, issues to everything public relations is about—theory, research, practice, pedagogy—is the concept and definition of a public” (p. 18). Hallahan (2000b) also argued that the idea of a public is one of the most conceptually troublesome notions in contemporary public relations.

Perhaps more important than the lack of research on message and receiver variables in public relations is the absence of a theoretical framework that links the two. According to Botan and Soto (1998), surprisingly little has been written about strategic communication and what it means for publics. They noted that, “because of the organization-centered perspective dominant in public relations and organizational communication scholarship, the whole field of communication has produced little research on publics or their internal functioning” (p. 23). In addition, Hallahan (2000a) stated that, “with the exception of limited-purpose situational theory, the public relations literature contains no systematic model that addresses how to segment publics or how different patterns of information processing by publics might impact message strategy” (p. 464). In fact, situational theory identifies relevant publics and when messages should be directed to publics, but it does not address message content (Vasquez, 1993). Thus, the relationship between the strategic messages communicated by organizations and the publics they are communicating with remains largely unexplored.

The lack of a theoretical linkage between publics and the messages directed to them by organizations has resulted in limited understanding of how public relations strategies are used in organizations and the effectiveness of strategies in achieving organizational goals. This indicates the need for more positive theory in public relations. Positive theories describe phenomena, events or activities as they actually occur; they are practical applications that represent reality (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1992). According to Massy and Weitz (1977; cited in J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1992), positive theories are useful in understanding problems. In addition, positive theories may predict outcomes if they are accurate, valid, and reliable in their description.

Problem Statement

A conceptualization of the public relations behavior of organizations is needed that addresses current limitations observed in the field. Specifically, research is needed that examines public relations from a communication perspective in order to better understand the influence of message and receiver variables on the public relations process.

Ultimately, the discipline requires a positive theory that links the message and receiver variables inherent to the public relations process. It requires an explanation of why organizations communicate with certain target publics differently than others and what the outcomes of this communication are likely to be. This requirement derives from the fact that public relations is an applied discipline. The increasing awareness and involvement of multiple publics in organizational behavior demand that organizations and public relations practitioners understand how communication with publics will affect the achievement of organizational goals. Organizations and practitioners faced with a rapidly changing environment require a useful framework that describes public relations as strategic communication with predictable outcomes.

Theoretical Foundation and Definition of Terms

Hazleton and Long's (1988) Public Relations Process Model provides a promising, yet largely unexplored, theoretical framework for understanding public relations that addresses some of the limitations currently faced by the discipline. Hazleton and Long define public relations as "a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals" (1988, p. 81).¹

Assuming a general systems theory approach, the public relations process model describes public relations as goal-driven communication strategies used by organizations to interact with target publics existing in their environment. A strategy is an observable phenomenon that refers to a behavioral sequence enacted in pursuit of some goal or objective (Greene, 1990). Communication strategies are messages enacted to accomplish specific goals in specific communication situations.

Hazleton (1992) developed a taxonomy of seven public relations strategies organizations use when communicating with publics. He labeled the strategies informative, facilitative, persuasive, cooperative problem solving, promise and reward, threat and punishment, and bargaining. Because informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving strategies are most frequently used in organizations (Page & Hazleton, 1999), they are the focus of the present study.

Informative strategies are based on the presentation of unbiased facts. They do not draw conclusions but instead presume the public will infer appropriate conclusions from

¹ Wilcox, Ault, Agee, & Cameron (2000) note that, among the various definitions of public relations that have been posited, this definition best reflects today's modern practice. "Their approach represents the somewhat newer theory that public relations is more than persuasion. It should also foster open, two-way communication and mutual understanding with the idea that an organization also changes its attitudes and behaviors in the process—not just the target audience" (p. 4).

accurate data. Facilitative strategies make resources available to a public that allow it to act in ways that it is already predisposed to act. Persuasive strategies are characterized by appeals to a public's values or emotions. They may include selective presentation of information and use language that is not neutral. Cooperative problem solving strategies are characterized by an open exchange of information to establish a common definition of a problem, share responsibilities about a problem, and determine common goals.

According to Hazleton (1992), situational variables related to publics influence public relations strategy use in organizations and the effectiveness of strategies in achieving organizational goals. This argument stems from research indicating that situational variables significantly influence the selection of communication strategies (Lustig & King, 1980; McLaughlin, Cody, & Robey, 1980; Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1977; Roloff & Barnicott, 1978), as well as the effectiveness of communication strategies in achieving desired outcomes (Spitzburg & Cupach, 1984).

In addition, scholars have long argued that communicators should adapt messages to audiences in order to produce effective outcomes (Littlejohn, 1983). The idea of audience segmentation into homogeneous groups that are likely to respond similarly to a message is widely accepted in the social sciences. In public relations, it is generally acknowledged that the communication behaviors of publics can best be understood by measuring how members of publics perceive situations in which they are affected by organizational consequences (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984); however, there is limited agreement on the attributes of publics that are most important to predicting communication effectiveness (Cline, McBride, & Miller, 1989; Hazleton, 1992; J. E. Grunig, 1989a; Scott & O'Hair, 1989).

Research shows support for the efficacy of the attributes of publics posited by the situational theory of publics (J. E. Grunig, 1997). According to J. E. Grunig, publics are formed when individuals face similar problems, recognize that a problem exists, and organize to do something about the problem. He used problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement as independent variables to predict whether a public will exhibit information seeking or information processing behavior (J. E. Grunig, 1997; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

According to J. E. Grunig (1997), problem recognition occurs when individuals realize that a situation has consequence for them, detect a problem in the situation, and begin to think about ways to solve the problem. Constraint recognition is the extent to which individuals perceive constraints, or obstacles, in a situation that limit their freedom to plan their own behavior. Involvement is the extent to which individuals perceive they are connected to a situation. Research suggests that, in addition to predicting the information seeking or information processing behavior of publics, these variables are attributes of publics that influence public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations (Page & Hazleton, 1999).

In addition to the variables identified by the situational theory, goal compatibility has been identified as an attribute of publics that influences the public relations behavior of organizations (Page, 2000a, 2000b; Page & Hazleton, 1999). Goal compatibility is the extent to which the goals or objectives of one party are similar to and coincide with the goals and objectives of another party (Page & Hazleton, 1999). As an attribute of publics, goal compatibility is a construct that describes the extent to which members of a public perceive their goals are similar to and coincide with the goals of an organization (Page,

2000a). Previous research indicates that goal compatibility significantly influences public relations strategy use in organizations and the effectiveness of strategies in achieving organizational goals (Page & Hazleton, 1999). However, little is known about how goal compatibility interacts with other attributes of publics and the effect it has on the communication behavior of publics.

Purpose and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to further theory-driven research in public relations by conducting an empirical analysis of the influence of attributes of publics on public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations.

Specifically, this study seeks to replicate and extend previous research by examining how the attributes of problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, and goal compatibility are related to use of informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving strategies in organizations and the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving organizational goals.

In accomplishing this objective, this study attempts to provide a foundation for the development of a positive theory of public relations strategy use in organizations that links the message and receiver variables inherent in the public relations process. This objective is accomplished by empirically testing the following hypotheses and related propositions:

- H1: In the implementation of public relations campaigns, informative and persuasive strategies are used more frequently than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies.
- H2: Perceived attributes of publics influence public relations strategy use in organizations.
- P2.1: When informative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition and low goal compatibility.

- P2.2: When facilitative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having moderate problem recognition, high goal compatibility, high involvement, and information processing behavior.
- P2.3: When persuasive strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition, low goal compatibility, low involvement, and information seeking behavior.
- P2.4: When cooperative problem-solving strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having high problem recognition, high goal compatibility, and information seeking behavior.
- H3: Perceived attributes of publics are predictors of public relations strategy effectiveness.
 - P3.1: Informative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition.
 - P3.2: Facilitative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and information processing behavior.
 - P3.3: Persuasive strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility.
 - P3.4: Cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition.

In addition, a secondary objective of this study is to develop a greater understanding of how goal compatibility functions as a receiver variable in public relations. Specifically, this research seeks to determine if goal compatibility is related to the independent and dependent variables of the situational theory of publics. Thus, it explores the following research questions:

- RQ1: Is goal compatibility related to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement in publics?
- RQ2: Does goal compatibility influence the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics?

Significance of Research

Public relations is an applied discipline; therefore, the theoretical concepts posited by scholars must find relevance in practice to be meaningful. The significance of this study

lies in its ability to contribute to public relations theory, practice, and pedagogy by positing a framework for public relations strategy use in organizations.

This study is significant to public relations theory because it attempts to advance a framework for understanding the message variable in the public relations process. Public relations scholars seek to develop a better understanding of public relations phenomena in the hopes of arriving at ways of predicting outcomes. Hazleton and Long's Public Relations Process Model is used as the theoretical framework for this study because it describes public relations as goal-driven strategic communication influenced by the situational interaction of source, message, and receiver variables. By using this model as a foundation for empirical investigation, researchers are able to identify and study a fuller, more inclusive range of variables thought to influence the public relations process. Therefore, this model brings scholars closer to a true depiction of the public relations behavior of organizations. However, empirical research on the model and its accompanying taxonomy of public relations strategies is limited (Page, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Page & Hazleton, 1999). The results of previous research support the validity of the model, but further investigation is needed to determine how it contributes to the theoretical and practical advancement of the discipline.

A second important contribution of this study is the usefulness of its findings in practice. Public relations practitioners require proven tools and techniques they can use to help organizations communicate more effectively with publics that affect and are affected by organizational behavior. It is clear that organizations use a variety of public relations strategies when communicating with publics. It is also clear that public relations strategy selection is not a random activity. In fact, strategies are defined as being both purposive

and managed (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000). Therefore, organizations need a practical framework for the development and implementation of strategic communication that is effective in achieving organizational goals in specific situations. This study seeks to provide such a framework. In addition, practitioners and organizations require a collective way of talking about public relations activity. The taxonomy of public relations strategies identified by Hazleton and tested in this study offers a universal way of discussing public relations activity.

Finally, this study seeks to contribute to public relations pedagogy by providing an integrative device for understanding the public relations process in organizations and an instructional framework for understanding the types of message strategies that are most effective with different types of publics. According to Hazleton and Long (1988), most public relations textbooks offer students “a compendiums of lists, rather than wholistic, interdisciplinary descriptions of the public relations process” (p. 86). In addition, many textbooks fail to emphasize commonalities across all public relations endeavors. As a result, students are not offered an integrated device for understanding their education. Furthermore, Hallahan (2000a) noted the lack of educational material related to message strategy. “At best, introductory public relations texts provide generalized reviews of communication theory. Meanwhile, writing textbooks offer few insights to beginning writers about how to write effectively for different publics” (p. 464). The findings of this study may provide a foundation for understanding message strategy that is useful to public relations educators.

Limitations

To test the hypotheses and propositions posited by this study, a survey of public relations practitioners was conducted using a repeated measures design with direct mail

and online modes of administration. For each of the public relations strategies of interest, practitioners were given a definition of the strategy and asked to rate the overall frequency with which that strategy was used by their organization. Next, practitioners were asked to recall a specific instance when the strategy was used by their organization and then rate statements regarding the attributes of the public the strategy was directed to. This means that the data gathered in this study reflect the public relations practitioners' perceptions of attributes of publics rather than actual attributes of publics. This indirect approach to measuring attributes of publics may appear to be a limitation; however, the methods used in this study were considered appropriate for several reasons.

First, the primary focus of this research is on the message variable in the public relations process. It examines four message strategies thought to commonly be used by organizations to communicate with publics, and it seeks to explain variance in the use and effectiveness of each strategy in relation to the others. Thus, it was necessary to study all four of the public relations strategies simultaneously.

In addition, it is posited that variance in strategy use and effectiveness is related to attributes of publics; thus, some method for gathering information about the public was necessary. Ideally, members of publics would be surveyed directly to gather data about their attributes when each of the four strategies is used by an organization. However, to generalize strategy use in organizations, observations are needed from many organizations, and direct examination of multiple publics for multiple organizations would be very difficult, from a resource perspective.

Although it may be possible to overcome this limitation by using experimental methods to simulate conditions, experiments do not represent what occurs in the real

world. This study posits the need for a positive theory of public relations behavior in organizations, and it attempts to provide evidence that can be used to support the development of such a theory. The hallmark of a positive theory is that it reflects reality; thus, research aimed at the development of a positive theory of the public relations behavior of organizations must be based on what occurs in practice. Therefore, experimentation does not provide a method suitable for gathering data about the phenomena of interest in this study.

The method of gathering data in this study provides a more accurate depiction of the attributes of publics important to practitioners and organizations when communicating with publics. Measuring publics directly offers insight into the public's perceptions; it advances our understanding of how and why publics communicate with organizations. However, it does not provide insight into how these perceptions influence public relations strategy use in organizations; it is inadequate for understanding why organizations communicate with publics. To understand the public relations behavior of organizations, we must attempt to understand how an organization's knowledge and perceptions of its publics influences its strategic communication choices.

A framework for understanding may be achieved by measuring how organizations perceive attributes of publics when communication strategies are used. This framework assumes that the actual perceptions of the public may not be as important to strategy selection in organizations as the organizations' assessment of these perceptions, regardless of whether the assessment is correct.

This argument is supported by White and Dozier (1992), who stated that organizations make decisions based on a "representation" of both the organization itself and the

organization's environment. "A representation is the set of shared perceptions of the organization and its environment that organization members use to make decisions. . . . Public relations practitioners play an important role in shaping perceptions of the environment—and the organization itself—among decision makers" (p. 92).

Furthermore, measuring practitioners' perceptions of attributes of publics may serve to extend the situational theory of publics, although this is not the focus of this study. The situational theory provides the theoretical foundation for three of the attributes of publics examined in this study. Previous studies have used self-reported measures of the theory's independent and dependent variables taken directly from members of a public. This study extends the situational theory's usual methodology by measuring the independent and dependent variables indirectly. If the predictions made by the situational theory are supported despite the indirect measurement of the independent and dependent variables, then the theory will be methodologically extended.

Theoretical advances in the theory, as well as limited empirical research, support this methodological extension. Specifically, theoretical clarifications in the theory made by J. E. Grunig (1997) suggest that each of the independent variables in the situational theory have both internal and external components. According to J. E. Grunig, external components of the variables represent the perceptions an individual has of the real world, rather than the internal cognitions an individual possesses in his or her mind. This distinction suggests that the external components of the variables are based on observable conditions in an individual's environment. Thus, it is possible that these conditions are observable to others in the environment as well. If so, it can be argued that these conditions are perceived by organizations as well as by members of publics. Thus,

organizations and practitioners form perceptions about the environment and about the attributes of publics that exist in the environment.

Finally, measuring practitioners' perceptions of attributes of publics provides a more realistic account of the knowledge possessed by public relations practitioners when strategic communication decisions are made. It is well known among public relations scholars that few practitioners engage in formal research aimed at understanding organizational publics. Thus, it can be assumed that most practitioners base strategic decisions on their informal perceptions of the public at the time of strategy implementation. If this is the case, then measuring practitioners' perceptions accounts for inconsistent research and variance in knowledge and perceptions among practitioners.

For these reasons, the methodology used to gather data for this study was considered necessary and appropriate for testing the hypotheses and propositions of interest. Further details concerning the methods used in this study are provided in Chapter 3.

Organization of Study

The following chapters detail the theoretical foundation, methodology, results, and conclusions of this study. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework supporting this research and reviews relevant literature. Chapter 3 explains the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data for this study, and Chapter 4 reports the results of data analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 draws conclusions about the results of this study, the limitations of the study, and the implications this research has for future public relations theory, practice and pedagogy.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study investigates the influence of attributes of publics on public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations. This chapter reviews literature relevant to this investigation. It begins by presenting an overview of Hazleton and Long's Public Relations Process Model as a theoretical framework for understanding the public relations behavior of organizations. Next, literature related to attributes of publics derived from J. E. Grunig's situational theory of publics is reviewed. This is followed by a review of literature related to the construct of goal compatibility. Finally, previous studies that provide the basis for the current investigation are reviewed and hypotheses are posited.

Theoretical Framework

Hazleton and Long's (1988) public relations process model provides the theoretical foundation for this study. Adopting a general systems theory approach, Hazleton and Long define public relations as a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals (Hazleton, 1993; Hazleton & Long, 1988; Long & Hazleton, 1985, 1987; Wilcox et al., 2000).

As such, public relations can be conceptualized as an open systems model consisting of a multi-dimensional environment and three subsystems (Hazleton & Long, 1988). At the macroscopic level, the environment is the system and public relations input, transformation, and output processes are made up of the organization, communication,

and target audience subsystems. Each of these subsystems, considered microscopically, possesses its own input-transformation-output cycles (p. 82).

Specifically, the public relations process consists of “(1) input from the environment (exogenous input) to the system, (2) transformation of inputs into communication goals, objectives, and campaigns, and (3) output, in the form of messages, to target audiences located in internal and external environments. Target audience reactions to public relations messages provide stimuli or further input for organizational maintenance or adaption, refinement of the public relations process, and alteration of the environment in which the organization exists” (p. 80). An illustration of the public relations process model conceptualized by Hazleton and Long (1988) is shown in Figure 1.

According to the model, the environment—as a macro-system—provides exogenous input into the three subsystems. Exogenous inputs are complex and consist of at least five interrelated, interacting dimensions: legal/political, social, economic, technological, and competitive.

The legal/political dimension embodies formal rules that govern organizational conduct, means for creating these rules, and methods of rule enforcement. This dimension considers electoral, legislative, administrative, and judicial processes. The social dimension consists of significant individuals and groups, and embodies the notion of public opinion. Social environments include consumers, suppliers, opinion leaders, and groups that may influence other dimensions through their communication activities. The economic dimension includes the availability of financial resources and the cost of other resources to the organization. The technological dimension consists of available mechanical/electronic devices or knowledge systems useful for accomplishing work.

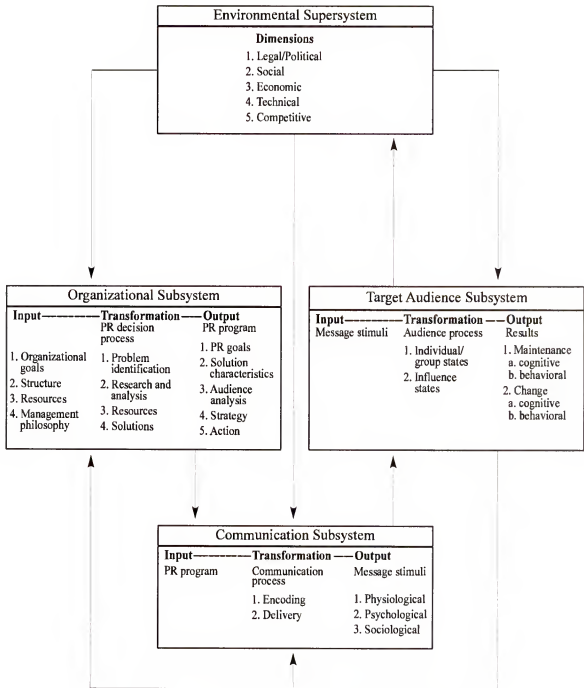


Figure 1. Public Relations Process Model.

Reproduced with permission of the publisher. Hazleton, V. & Long, L. (1988). Concepts for public relations education, research, and practice: A communication point of view. *Central States Communication Journal*, 39(2), 83-86.

This dimension may directly influence public relations practice via the evolution of communication technology, or it may indirectly impact public relations through other dimensions. Finally, the competitive dimension consists of other organizations that have goals that are either compatible or incompatible with the goals of the organization (Hazleton & Long, 1988, p. 82-83).

Exogenous inputs from these five dimensions affect endogenous inputs within each of the three subsystems. Transformation of these inputs into communication goals, objectives, and campaigns occurs in the organizational subsystem. Inputs from the environment interact with the organization, impacting organizational goals, structure, acquisition of resources, and management philosophy. For public relations, goals direct behavior and serve as constraints in the decision process (Hazleton & Long, 1988).

According to Hazleton (1992), organizational goals serve as criteria, or reference points, for the analysis of inputs. Transformation of these inputs occurs during the public relations decision process and includes problem identification, research and analysis, resource assessment, and solution identification. The decision process begins with monitoring environmental and organizational states, while comparing each with organizational goals. Discrepancies lead to the identification of problems. The research and analysis phase provides a systematic method for gathering, organizing, and interpreting data to provide information during the decision process. Resources constrain the organization's ability to process inputs during the problem identification and research and analysis phases of the process. Resources also impact the selection of viable solutions to problems during the solution identification phase. During this phase of the decision process, appropriate and effective solutions for achieving organizational goals are

examined. A solution's efficacy for contributing to organizational goals is the primary criterion in solution selection (Hazleton & Long, 1988). Goals, therefore, significantly impact the transformation of inputs during the public relations decision process.

The selection of communication-related solutions to problems defined during the decision process results in a public relations program that consists of public relations goals, characteristics of solutions, audience analysis, public relations strategies, and practical modes of action (Hazleton & Long, 1988). The public relations program, as output from the organizational subsystem, provides input into the communication subsystem.

According to Hazleton & Long (1988), the communication subsystem provides a boundary-spanning function among the environment, organization, and target audience subsystems. The function of this boundary-spanning role is the encoding and delivery of messages. Messages must take tangible form before they can be communicated; therefore, this aspect of encoding is concerned with the verbal, nonverbal, task, and socio-emotional content of messages. Implementation and delivery are a technical/administrative process involving medium or channel selection. Factors affecting media selection include the environment, function, cost, content limitations, speed, control, and level of audience involvement. Communication subsystem outputs, then, are the messages to which audiences are exposed (p. 85).

The target audience subsystem receives stimuli from the communication subsystem and experiences a series of evaluation states in response to the message stimuli. Individual and group evaluation of messages is often examined with respect to physiological, psychological, demographic, and behavior profiles. These factors assist in

explaining target audience influence states; they are not necessarily independent and may change over time. Individual/group states and influence states are primary descriptors used in audience analysis and direct the organization subsystem during the decision-making process via research. Failure to analyze the target audience adequately often leads to errors in output from the organization and communication subsystems (Hazleton & Long, 1988; Long & Hazleton, 1987).

Target audience output results in environmental and organizational maintenance, adaption, and/or alteration. The public relations process may influence either cognitions or behaviors. Behavioral change at the group level may be described as structural change. Output feeds back into the environment and the organizational subsystem, influencing subsequent public relations activity. Like other communication activities, the public relations process is continuous and dynamic.

This review of the public relations process model reveals the importance of goals to the public relations process. Public relations goals are a consequence of organizational goals derived from the public relations decision process and provide the impetus for organizational goal achievement through communication (Hazleton, 1993). However, goals must be translated into communication strategies that define appropriate and effective action for goal achievement. This is facilitated in two ways. First, characteristics of strategies must be examined in order to identify constraints on strategy selection. Second, characteristics of audiences (referred to as attributes of publics) must be examined in order to select strategies most appropriate to specific audience segments. These variables are examined in detail in the following sections.

Public Relations Strategies

A strategy is an observable phenomenon that refers to a behavioral sequence enacted in pursuit of some goal or objective (Greene, 1990). Communication strategies are messages enacted to accomplish specific goals relevant to specific communication situations. Thus, strategies are situational constructs. According to Hazleton (1993), public relations behavior in organizations is enacted through communication strategies designed to achieve organizational goals. Communication strategies are manifest in the form of messages that serve as inputs to target audiences located in the environment. This manifestation is a functional result of the communication process—a process defined by encoding and delivery of messages through the analysis of symbols.

Hazleton (1993) stated that symbols are observable tangible parts of the communication process. Public relations communication consists of one or more symbols encoded as a message by an organization and decoded by a public. In order for communication to be effective, symbols or symbol systems must be shared or at least understood by both source and receiver in the communication process. As socially constructed objects that take physical form and have predictable effects, symbols may be viewed as organizational resources. Organizations expend other types of resources to develop and use symbolic resources in order to accomplish organizational goals (Hazleton, 1993, p. 89). This occurs through communication.

Therefore, it is possible to analyze messages as symbolic communication that contains unique physical, psychological, and social properties. “Physically, messages are tangible stimuli that can be perceived. Psychologically, meanings attributed to messages by receivers can be specified. Socially, significant others influence individual message evaluation processes” (Hazleton & Long, 1988, p. 85).

Hazleton (1993) used these concepts to develop a matrix for the analysis of public relations messages as symbolic communication. This matrix is illustrated in Figure 2. The top of the matrix reflects increasing levels of abstraction of the audience in terms of message effects and message processing. At the first level, messages are seen as physical objects to be apprehended and processed by individuals. At the second level, messages are seen as objects to be understood by individuals, so their psychological impact is considered. At the third level, the impact of social processes on symbol effects is considered (p. 91).

The left side of the matrix consists of three general concepts—content, structure, and function—that reflect assumptions about the characteristics of messages. Although these concepts are present at every point in the communication process, they are aspects of symbolic messages that can be viewed independently. As a result, they can be recognized and understood without knowing the motive or the characteristics of the source of the message.

Content refers to the manifest characteristics of messages. Structure refers to the distribution and frequency of communication elements within a particular level of analysis. Function references the audience and reflects assumptions about message effects. According to Hazleton (1993), “The classification of messages according to their functional characteristics must take into account characteristics of the audience for the message. Specifically, strategic choices reflect assumptions about motivational, cognitive, and behavioral characteristics of audiences” (p. 91).

Hazleton identified six functions of messages at the psychological level that reflect public relations strategies used by organizations when communicating with publics.

	Physical	Psychological	Sociological
Content	graphic-visual oral-aural tactile olfactory taste	A. <u>Reference</u> denotative connotative B. <u>Style</u> logical interesting emotional assertive face-preserving concise ambiguous factual	rhetorical visions fantasy themes symbolic cues fantasy types sagas
Structure	intensity contrast special order chronological order	A. <u>Organic</u> spatial chronological types B. <u>Psychological</u> cause/effect problem/solving climax anti-climax	A. <u>Distribution</u> network size network shape symmetry relationship B. <u>Frequency</u> activity topic/symbol
Function	A. <u>Attributions to Symbols</u> repeat contradict substitute complement accent verify B. <u>Attributions to Communicators</u> relationship status affect	Facilitate Inform Coerce Bargain Solve problems Persuade	A. <u>Task Performance</u> problem identification solution identification behavior regulation information exchange B. <u>Group Maintenance</u> socialization consciousness raising conflict resolution leadership

Figure 2. Matrix for the Analysis of Public Relations Symbols.

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These functions represent the goals of public relations in terms of the impact messages have on audiences and the meanings audiences attribute to messages. The six functions are: facilitate, inform, persuade, coerce, bargain, and solve problems.

The first four functions—facilitate, inform, persuade, and coerce—derive from social change literature and include concepts for planned change identified by Zaltman and Duncan (1977). Although there is no definitive way of categorizing the strategies, they are considered to lie on a continuum of degree of pressure exerted (p. 60). In addition, Zaltman and Duncan stated that multiple strategies might be employed to accomplish a desired outcome.

Hazleton (1993) said public relations is a communication function through which organizations alter, maintain, or adapt to their environment. Inherent in this definition is the concept of change. Organizations seek to avoid change and promote change in themselves and others (p. 88). Therefore, concepts related to social change seem appropriate for describing the functional aspects of public relations strategies.

The last two functions identified in the matrix—bargaining and problem solving—incorporate J. E. Grunig's ideas about direction and purpose of communication (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). These strategies reflect characteristics of the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models of public relations described in J. E. Grunig's excellence theory (1992).

Hazleton (1992) used these six psychological functions of messages to develop a taxonomy of public relations strategies organizations use when communicating with publics. Hazleton labeled the strategies: informative, facilitative, persuasive, threat and punishment, promise and reward, bargaining, and cooperative problem solving.

Informative strategy. An informative strategy is based on the presentation of unbiased facts and assumes a rational and motivated audience. Informative messages do not draw conclusions, but instead presume the public will infer appropriate conclusions from accurate data. Informative messages may suggest a variety of alternative solutions to problems. In addition, they are characterized by the use of neutral language and organic, or natural, patterns of organization to create greater ease of comprehension.

Research indicates that time-on-task and frequency of exposure to messages are positively related to learning; therefore, informative strategies are most effective when behavioral change within a target public does not have to occur quickly. Zaltman and Duncan (1977) stated that informative strategies are effective in enhancing problem recognition, so they may be used to build a foundation for future learning. However, it may not be desirable to mention a specific solution, especially a controversial one, until a clear need has been established. Informative strategies can be effective in creating awareness of a problem and establishing perceptions that a known problem can be resolved (i.e., reducing constraint recognition), but when an organization does not possess the resources to sustain a needed long-term involvement, an informative strategy alone will not be effective (p. 132).

In addition, informative strategies are useful at the awareness stage of the change process. They are effective in inoculating individuals against appeals to resist change or to revert back to a previous pattern of behavior. When resistance to change is high, informative strategies require more time to be effective. Furthermore, informative strategies are indicated when a public does not possess the knowledge or skills necessary to implement a change, and they are most effective with highly motivated publics.

Facilitative strategy. A facilitative strategy is accomplished by making resources available to a public that allow it to act in ways that it is already predisposed to act. Resources may be tangible artifacts, such as tools or money, or they may be directions for accomplishing specific tasks.

According to Zaltman and Duncan (1977), facilitative strategies are useful when the public recognizes a problem, agrees remedial action is needed, is open to external assistance, and is willing to engage in self-help. Facilitative strategies are most effective when used with a program that creates awareness among the public of the availability of assistance. In addition, an organization using a facilitative strategy must determine if the continuation of the strategy will require continued resource expenditures after the initial implementation of the change. Facilitative strategies may be used to compensate for low motivation and are indicated when target publics lack the resources needed to implement or maintain a change. Furthermore, if the resistance to change is great, a facilitative strategy is less likely to succeed.

Persuasive strategy. A persuasive strategy is characterized by appeals to a public's values or emotions. This strategy may include a selective presentation of information. It may use language that is not neutral and reflects the importance of the issue and/or the involvement of the source in the situation. Persuasive messages are directive in that they contain a call for action, either tacitly or explicitly.

According to Zaltman and Duncan (1977), persuasive strategies are indicated when a problem is not recognized or considered important by a public, when involvement is low, or when a particular solution is not perceived to be effective. Persuasive strategies are useful when it is necessary to induce a public to reallocate resources from one program or

activity to an alternative advocated by the organization. These strategies are often used when an organization does not have direct control over a public through the manipulation of resources valued by the public, and persuasive strategies are useful when time constraints are great and the ability to use power is low (p. 151).

In addition, persuasive strategies may be useful when a public's motivation to change is low, but they are not feasible when a target public lacks resources to sustain change. These strategies are particularly useful at the legitimization and evaluation stages of the change process and when the magnitude of change is considered to be great or perceived to be risky. Persuasion may be necessary when trial is not possible, changes are difficult to understand, or there is no visible relative advantage. Furthermore, greater resistance to change in target publics indicates a greater need for persuasive strategies; however, resistance to change increases when members of a public are aware of an intention to persuade.

Promise and reward strategy. A promise and reward strategy has a coercive function in that it involves the exercise of power to obtain compliance. It includes a directive and contingent outcome that may be explicitly or tacitly linked to performance of the directive request. This strategy uses positive coercion in that it implies the source of the message controls an outcome desired by the receiver of the message.

Threat and punishment strategy. A threat and punishment strategy employs negative coercion in that it involves the exercise of power and threat to gain compliance. This strategy includes a directive and contingent outcome that may be explicitly or tacitly linked to performance of the directive request. This strategy implies the source of the message controls an outcome feared or disliked by the receiver of the message.

Both promise and reward and threat and punishment strategies are considered coercive techniques because they exercise power to gain compliance. According to Zaltman and Duncan (1977), power strategies are useful when a public's perceived need for change is low; however, a power strategy will not be effective if a public does not have the resources required to accept change and the organization cannot provide them. A power strategy may be effective in getting a public to reallocate resources to initiate and sustain change. Power strategies also are useful when there is anticipated resistance to change, a solution to a problem has to be implemented in a short period of time and change must occur quickly. In addition, an organization must be able to control outcomes for target publics for power strategies to be effective; therefore, these strategies often require more resources than other strategies. Power strategies are more effective when behavioral change is the goal and psychological change is not important. If psychological change is important, power strategies must be combined with other strategies. Finally, promise and reward strategies are easier to use than threat and punishment strategies because they are more socially acceptable.

Bargaining strategy. Bargaining strategies are characterized by an organized exchange of messages between communicators. Strategic withholding of information and deception designed to mislead others concerning an acceptable range of alternatives and to discover the other party's acceptable range of alternatives are used. Bargaining communication is characterized by the use of contrasting symbols that differentiate groups, such as 'we' and 'they.' This strategy reflects characteristics similar to J. E. Grunig's two-way asymmetrical model in that organizations and publics are likely to have incompatible goals and information withholding is a common tactic.

Bargaining strategies are indicated when interdependence is high. This means that all parties to the bargaining situation are dependent on the cooperation of the other parties to achieve their goals. This is a constraint in that bargaining is a competitive situation.

Bargaining is likely to be a more viable strategy when the goals of differing parties are less compatible; however, bargaining is not likely to be effective unless all parties have a range of acceptable alternatives from which a solution can be achieved.

Cooperative problem solving strategy. A cooperative problem solving strategy reflects a willingness to jointly define problems and solutions to problems. Messages derived from this strategy are characterized by an open exchange of information to establish a common definition of the problem, common goals, and to share positions and responsibilities about the issue. These strategies use inclusive symbols, such as ‘we.’ In addition, this strategy reflects characteristics of J. E. Grunig’s two-way symmetrical model in that there is a sense of interdependence among the organization and its publics. Cooperation is effective when the organization and the public recognize their interdependence and feel a need for each other’s participation in the identification of problems and the development of alternative solutions. The more compatible the goals of differing parties are, the more likely a cooperative problem solving strategy will be effective. All parties must be able to agree on a common problem definition and common solution to the problem; therefore, openness and fairness characterize these strategies.

The public relations process model and its accompanying taxonomy of public relations strategies offers a much-needed framework for understanding the public relation behavior of organizations. An underlying assumption of the model is that it is situational, asserting that an organization’s perception of the audience it is communicating with at a given time

guides the organization's strategy selection (Hazleton, 1993). Attributes of publics can be identified by organizations during the research and analysis phase of the public relations decision process and used to select public relations strategies most appropriate and effective in achieving organizational goals. In this way, organizational goals are aligned with attributes of publics to facilitate strategy use, and public relations strategies become the functional link between organizational goals and publics. Moreover, by viewing public relations strategies as symbolic messages guided by attributes of publics, it is possible to predict the effectiveness of strategies in achieving organizational goals. However, the attributes of publics that are most influential to public relations strategy use in organizations also must be identified.

Attributes of Publics

Scholars have long argued that communicators should adapt messages to audiences in order to produce effective outcomes (Littlejohn, 1983). The idea of audience segmentation into homogeneous groups that are likely to respond similarly to a message is widely accepted, although there is little agreement on the audience variables most appropriate to predicting communication outcomes (Cline, McBride, & Miller, 1989; Hazleton, 1992; J. E. Grunig, 1989; Scott & O'Hair, 1989).

Public speaking and mass communication scholars have been studying audiences and how to reach them for more than half a century (Botan & Soto, 1998), and segmentation techniques have been used in marketing and advertising to divide mass markets into specialized markets for some time (Cameron, 1992). Although the segmentation methods of other disciplines have been applied to public relations, they have limited value due to the unique conceptualization of a public offered by public relations (Moffitt, 1992).

As a result, public relations scholars have sought to develop discipline-specific theory that examines the attributes of publics most likely to impact communication between organizations and publics. One of the most useful theories for understanding why publics communicate and when they are most likely to communicate is the situational theory of publics (Aldoory, 2001; Cameron, 1992; J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992; Hamilton, 1992). The following section reviews literature related to this theory.

Situational Theory of Publics

The situational perspective for understanding and segmenting publics derives from a social-psychological perspective brought on by the mass demonstrations, riots, strikes, and spontaneous crowd formation that typified human social and psychological behavior at the turn of the 20th century (Herbst, 1993; Price, 1992; Vasquez & Taylor, 2001). At that time, scholars with an interest in mass behavior began to view a public as part of a larger social-psychological process, positing that human relations were adapted and social change occurred through public discussion and debate over issues (Vasquez & Taylor, 2001).

According to Vasquez and Taylor, the socio-psychological view is founded on the belief that a public is analogous to a situational state of “socio-/psycho-consciousness.”

As interests, issues, problems, states of arousal, and states of consciousness change from situation to situation, the characteristics and composition of the public also change. Differences are attributed to prevailing individual and social-psychological conditions. Therefore, a public is viewed as a situationally developing social entity that emerges through spontaneous argument, discussion, and collective opposition to some issue or problematic situation. (2001, p. 142)

Public opinion scholars such as Robert Park, John Dewey, and Herbert Blumer are credited with the early development of the situational perspective (Hallahan, 2000b; J. E. Grunig, 1997; Vasquez & Taylor, 2001). Park (1904/1972) defined a public as an

emerging social entity characterized by opposition and social discourse, organization in response to an issue, and the ability to think and reason with others. Dewey (1927) viewed a public as a group of people who face a similar problem, recognize that a problem exists, and organize to do something about the problem. Blumer (1946) extended and refined Park's definition, referring to a public as a group of people who are confronted by an issue, are divided in their ideas of how to meet the issue, and engage in discussion about the issue.

According to Vasquez and Taylor (2001), more recent research in advertising, marketing, and public relations has contributed to the situational perspective for the purpose of helping organizations create messages to respond to public concerns. This has resulted in segmentation of publics based on "differential response" (p. 143). Differential response refers to general differences in behavioral responses identified through variables that attempt to predict such responses. These variables have been categorized into two types: inferred and objective. Inferred variables include perceptions, cognitions, and attitudes and are developed through direct interaction with a targeted group of people. These variables are believed to provide for the prediction of desired behaviors and effects (Kolter & Anderson, 1987; Massy & Weitz, 1977). Objective variables rely on secondary sources—like demographics, geographics, and media use—to identify publics and are less effective in making predictions of behaviors and effects (Frank, Massy, & Wind, 1972; Kolter & Anderson, 1987; Massy & Weitz, 1977).

The most systematic investigation of social-psychological concepts for segmentation of publics in public relations has been conducted by J. E. Grunig, who extended the ideas of Park, Dewey, and Blumer to develop, test, and validate a situational theory of publics

(Vasquez & Taylor, 2001). Introduced more than three decades ago, the situational theory of publics posits that “communication behaviors of publics can be best understood by measuring how members of publics perceive situations in which they are affected by organizational consequences” (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 148).

J. E. Grunig (1978) adopted Dewey’s (1927) definition of a public, stating that organizational publics are formed “when a group of people: (1) face a similar indeterminate situation; (2) recognize what is problematic in the situation; (3) organize to do something about the problem” (p. 109). Situational theory provides for the precise identification and segmentation of a public based on a pattern of similar behaviors identified through inferred variables. Specifically, Grunig used problem recognition, level of involvement, and constraint recognition as independent variables to predict whether a public is information seeking or information processing. This determines if the public will exhibit active or passive communication behavior.

Information seeking is characterized by active communication behavior—the planned scanning of the environment for messages about a specific topic (Clarke & Kline, 1974; cited in J. E. Grunig, 1997). Individuals who are active communicators expend effort to locate and consume information about the issue under consideration. J. E. Grunig (1997) said that individuals “communicating actively develop more organized cognitions, are more likely to have attitudes about a situation, and more often engage in behavior to do something about the situation” (p. 6). In addition, active publics often seek information through a variety of media, interpersonal contacts, and specialized channels (J. E. Grunig, 1980; Heath, Liao, & Douglas, 1995).

Information processing is the unplanned discovery of a message followed by continued processing of it (Clarke & Kline, 1974; cited in J. E. Grunig, 1997). It is characterized as passive communication with low levels of activity. It produces little or no effort on the part of the individual to seek information. However, if the situation is somewhat involving, the individual will passively process information as it is presented. The fact that people pay attention to the information distinguishes processing from mere exposure to a message (Slater, Chipman, Auld, Keefe, & Kendall, 1992). Generally, when a public processes the information that it receives randomly, its members invest less effort to understand it; therefore, it has less impact than information that is actively sought. In addition, passive publics are more likely to process information from the mass media as opposed to other information sources (J. E. Grunig, 1980; Heath et al., 1995).

According to J. E. Grunig and Repper (1992), organizations can communicate more easily with active publics because they seek out information rather than passively receive it (p. 137). J. E. Grunig identified three independent variables that explain why people engage in a behavior and communicate actively or passively in the process of planning that behavior (1978, 1983a, 1989b; J. E. Grunig & Childers, 1988; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). These variables are problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement.

Problem recognition is the extent to which individuals perceive that a situation has consequence for them, detect a problem in the situation, and begin to think about ways to solve the problem (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The concept of problem recognition came from Dewey (1910, 1938, 1939), who defined it as the perception that something is lacking in a situation. Dewey theorized that people seek information and think about information when they recognize an indeterminate or problematic situation. Thus, the

concept of problem recognition is closely tied to the concept of situation. Dewey argued that problems arise from life situations, or what Dervin (1981) called, “specific moments in time-space when information is used” (p. 80). Because people communicate about problematic situations, analysis of how they perceive different types of life situations shows when and about what people will communicate (J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992, p. 135). According to J. E. Grunig (1989a), problems may arise externally from the situation, environment, or social system. In addition, J. E. Grunig and Childers (1988) found that problems may arise internally from curiosity or lack of understanding.

The situational theory of publics posits that problem recognition increases the likelihood that a member of a public will both seek and process information. Individuals who recognize a problem will seek information because they need it to plan behaviors for addressing the problem. Individuals who recognize a problem are also more likely to process information that comes randomly than individuals who do not recognize a problem.

Constraint recognition, the second independent variable in the situational theory, represents the extent to which individuals perceive obstacles, or barriers, in a situation that limit their freedom to plan their own behavior (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Research suggests that perceived constraint recognition tends to discourage communication behavior (J. E. Grunig, 1983; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). “People do not communicate about problems or issues about which they believe they can do little or about behaviors they do not believe they have the personal efficacy to execute” (J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992, p. 135).

Concepts similar to constraint recognition appear in several social science theories (J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992). It has been used in economics and management science to maximize profits within the constraints of resources available to decision makers (Greene, Adam, & Ebert, 1985). In psychology, Brehm and Cohen (1962) found that individual volition, or the absence of constraints, was a necessary condition for cognitive dissonance. In addition, constraint recognition appears as personal efficacy in Bandura's (1977) social learning theory.

According to the situational theory of publics, a high level of constraint recognition lessens the likelihood that people will seek information or that they will process information that comes to them randomly. In a 1983 study on the effects of a drunk-driving campaign, J. E. Grunig and Ipes found that, of the three independent variables, the campaign affected constraint recognition the least. The authors concluded that, "for a campaign to move people to develop organized cognitions and perhaps to change their behavior, it must show people how they can remove constraints to their personally doing anything about the problem" (p. 51).

Level of involvement, the third independent variable in the situational theory, is the extent to which an issue, problem, or situation has personal relevance to an individual (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The concept of involvement has been used widely in marketing and communication research, with varying definitions and measures (Aldoory, 2001; J. E. Grunig & Childers, 1988; J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992; Salmon, 1986). Specifically, involvement has been defined as a personality trait, a state of ego involvement, a characteristic of a situational stimulus that varies among individuals, and a characteristic of a product or issue that is the same for most people (J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992, p.

136). J. E. Grunig defined involvement as an individual's cognitive perception of a situation (J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992).

Hallahan (2000b) noted that, "although the involvement construct suffers from a variety of conceptualizations, it has generated robust findings among researchers" (p. 506). Research indicates that individuals with high involvement analyze issues more often and prefer messages that contain more and better arguments (Heath et al., 1995; Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). In addition, individuals with high involvement are likely to attain greater knowledge levels than those with low involvement (Chaffee & Roser, 1986; Engelberg, Flora, & Nass, 1995).

According to the situational theory of publics, level of involvement helps to distinguish whether an individual's communication behavior will be active or passive. When people perceive they are involved in a situation, they will be more likely to actively seek information. Similarly, if an individual personally connects to an issue or message, that individual will more likely attend to and comprehend it. However, research has shown that even when individuals have low involvement, they still process information passively (J. E. Grunig, 1979c). In addition, a member of a public who perceives a strong involvement in an issue generally also has high problem recognition and low constraint recognition for that issue (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

J. E. Grunig and Hunt (1984) summarized the influence of the three independent variables of the situational theory by stating that "high problem recognition, low constraint recognition, and high level of involvement increase information seeking. High problem recognition and low constraint recognition also increase information processing. Level of involvement, however, has a limited effect on information processing" (p. 153).

According to the theory, the three independent variables predict when people will communicate. They also predict that active communication behavior more often results in effects of communication—cognitions, attitudes, individual and collective behaviors—than does passive communication behavior (J. E. Grunig, 1983a, 1989b, 1997; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; J. E. Grunig & Ipes, 1983; J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992). J. E. Grunig and Repper (1992) stated that, “because these differential responses include most objectives for a public relations program, the three concepts provide an especially effective theory of segmentation” (p. 137).

Through the use of these variables, four generally enduring types of publics have been identified (J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). An all-issue public is active on all issues. An apathetic public is inattentive to all issues. A single-issue public is active on one or a small subset of issues that concern only a small part of the population. A hot-issue public is active on a single issue that involves nearly everyone in the population and has received extensive media attention.

The situational theory of publics has been applied widely in public relations research with fairly consistent results. The copious work using the theory was reviewed by J. E. Grunig (1997; J. E. Grunig & Repper, 1992) and is recited here to provide a comprehensive summary of the development of the theory.

Many studies have used the situational theory to identify various organizational publics, including employee publics of utilities (J. E. Grunig, 1975), scientific organizations (J. E. Grunig, 1977; L. A. Grunig, 1985; Pelham, 1977; Schneider [aka L. A. Grunig], 1978), educational systems (J. E. Grunig, 1985, 1987; J. E. Grunig & Theus, 1986), and a community college (Waddell, 1979). Other uses include identification of

members of an association (J. E. Grunig, 1979a), consumers for a grocery chain (J. E. Grunig, 1974), community publics of a hospital (J. E. Grunig, 1978; J. E. Grunig & Disbrow, 1977), constituents of a local government (Conley, 1977), environmental publics (Essich, 1984; J. E. Grunig, 1983a, 1989b; J. E. Grunig & Disbrow, 1977), agricultural publics (J. E. Grunig, Nelson, Richburg, & White, 1988; Myers, 1985; Turner, 1981), student publics (J. E. Grunig, 1982a), reporters for business issues (J. E. Grunig, 1983b), corporate publics for social responsibility issues (J. E. Grunig, 1979b, 1982b), publics for a campaign on drunk driving (J. E. Grunig & Ipes, 1983), publics for AIDS awareness (J. E. Grunig & Childers, 1988), publics for fire safety (Spicer, 1985), publics of the Federal Reserve System (Baldwin, 1989), readers of science news (Bishop, 1983), readers of an issues newsletter (Davis-Belcher, 1990), readers of a university magazine (Gibbs, 1986), donors of a fundraising program (Kelly, 1979), publics for the election of a governor (Hamilton, 1992), and publics arising from a natural disaster (Major, 1993, 1998).

In addition to identifying organizational publics, many studies have supported, replicated, and/or extended the situational theory (Aldoory, 2001; Berkowitz & Turnmire, 1994; Cameron, 1992; Cameron & Yang, 1991; Chay-Nemeth, 2001; Dorner & Coombs, 1994; Elliott, Mahmoud, Sothirajah, & Camphor, 1991; Hallahan, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Hamilton, 1992; Heath, et al., 1995; Heath & Douglas, 1990; J. E. Grunig, 1989b, 1992a; J. E. Grunig & Childers, 1988; J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1988; J. E. Grunig et al., 1988; Major, 1993; Roser & Thompson, 1995; Sha, 1999; Slater et al., 1992; Vasquez, 1993). Notable extensions of the theory have occurred in two primary areas: research that

differentiates dimensions of the three independent variables and research that analyzes antecedent factors of these variables.

In the first area, personal and impersonal dimensions of the independent variables have been examined (Cameron & Yang, 1991; Dorner & Coombs, 1994; Heath & Douglas, 1990). Specifically, scholars suggested that the independent variables were driven by either egoistic (personal) concerns or altruistic (impersonal) concerns. Research indicated that differentiating situations by these dimensions improved segmentation of publics (Cameron & Yang, 1991; Dorner & Coombs, 1994).

In addition, J. E. Grunig differentiated internal and external dimensions of the independent variables in response to questions of whether they were indicators of real or perceived environmental factors. Although problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement were originally conceptualized as external perceptions of the environment, rhetorical scholars viewed the concepts as “strictly cognitive (internal) (or ‘communicative’ in their terms) rather than as perceptions of real (external) situations” (J. E. Grunig, 1997, p. 25). According to J. E. Grunig (1997), the significance of the distinction lies in the relationship of cognitions and perceptions to behavior. If the concepts are strictly cognitive, the behavior produced by the cognitions can be influenced directly through communication designed to change the cognitions. However, if the concepts are perceptions of real world conditions, real changes must be made in the environment before perceptions of the situation change and behavior can be influenced.

In an attempt to resolve these theoretical questions, J. E. Grunig (1997) extended the theory, asserting that problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement each have internal and external components. He stated, “For problem

recognition, the distinction lies in the fact that problems recognized could be in a person's environment or strictly in his or her mind. Internal problems reflect curiosity or intellectual interests. External problems are problems with which an individual conceivably would have to deal in the real world" (1997, p. 26).

In explaining the distinction between internal and external constraint recognition, J. E. Grunig drew from Weick's (1979) cognitive theory of organizations, which emphasizes that the environment of an organization exists partly in the mind of the people who observe it and partly 'out there.' Thus, constraints can be either internal or external (p. 26). He also drew from Bandura (1977) to support the internal and external conceptualization of constraint recognition. Bandura used the concept of 'self-efficacy' to explain why some information campaigns are effective and others are not. Bandura argued that if people believe they can do something about a problem, they are more likely to use information related to that problem; however, communication campaigns can increase self-efficacy by providing a model of how a change can be made. Thus, if self-efficacy can be changed without making actual changes in constraints, then it must be based at least in part on an internal conception of constraints.

Finally, in differentiating internal and external involvement, J. E. Grunig drew from Salmon (1986), stating that internal involvement is ego involvement, which exists in a person's mind, and external involvement is actual involvement in a situation that occurs in a person's real-world environment.

In summarizing how these dimensions influence the segmentation of publics, J. E. Grunig (1997) stated that internal situational concepts identify intellectual publics—publics that are concerned about a problem but not active in doing something about it.

Conversely, the external concepts identify publics that are actually engaged in behavior to do something about a problem. Although research using the internal and external components of the independent variables is limited, J. E. Grunig and Childers (1988) found that internal and external problem recognition explained communication behavior better than the internal and external dimensions of involvement and constraint recognition. They also found that external problem recognition was related to internal involvement, suggesting that people most often recognize problems that are related to their self-identity. Although their study failed to identify separate publics for the internal and external components of the variables, the results contributed to the understanding of publics. According to J. E. Grunig (1997), the findings suggest that people do not become intellectual publics unless they also believe a problem actually affects them to some extent. "In other words, externally involved publics also are more likely to take an internal, intellectual interest in issues than are publics that do not perceive an actual involvement" (p. 28).

The situational theory also has been extended through examination of antecedent factors of the three independent variables. Sha (1999) found that ethnic identity was significantly related to problem recognition and involvement but not constraint recognition. Hallahan (1999) examined antecedent factors to motivation, which he likened to involvement. His analysis focused on the content of media messages and used factors derived from marketing and consumer research, including attractiveness of and interest in messages, novel stimuli, complexity, and source characteristics. Aldoory (2001) qualitatively examined antecedent factors to involvement. She found that a consciousness of everyday life, source preferences, self-identity, personal health

consciousness, and cognitive analysis of message content influenced women's involvement with health messages.

Obviously, the situational theory of publics provides a rich foundation for understanding the concept of publics and the variables important to segmentation of publics. It offers three robust independent variables that have been shown to predict the active and passive communication behavior of publics. In doing so, it aids organizations in understanding and prioritizing the information needs of publics. Vasquez (1993) stated that "the utility of Grunig's theory lies in its ability to determine and identify the information-processing and information-seeking behaviors of specific publics to the organization, thus allowing the organization to direct communication campaigns to targeted publics" (p. 209).

An important limitation of the situational theory, however, stems from its organization-centered approach. The theory uses "a structural-functional, business management perspective to define the organization-public relationship as opposed to a communication-based perspective" (Vasquez, 1993, p. 209). As a result, the theory falls short of providing a full account of variables that influence communication between organizations and publics. Specifically, the theory does not include the strategic content of messages—the critical link between source and receiver variables in the communication process (Vasquez, 1993).

This limitation was also addressed by Hallahan (2000a), who proposed a strategic message framework for effective communication with publics. However, his framework was limited to message tactics and techniques. It did not address the strategic purpose of messages or the message content required to achieve strategic outcomes.

The limitations of the situational theory may be overcome by viewing public relations as goal-driven strategic communication influenced by the situational interaction of source, message, and receiver variables. According to Hazleton (1993), an organization's perception of the audience it is communicating with at a given time guides the organization's strategy selection. Attributes of publics are identified by organizations and used to select strategies most appropriate and effective in achieving organizational goals. In this way, organizational goals are aligned with attributes of publics to facilitate strategy use, and public relations strategies become the functional link between organizations and publics.

In addition to its focus on attributes of publics, this conceptualization of public relations privileges organizational goals in strategy selection. According to Heath and Nelson (1986), organizational goals are central to all other activities in an organization. In fact, it is generally understood among scholars that the effectiveness of public relations is judged by its contribution to organizational goal achievement (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001; Dozier & Ehling, 1992; Hon, 1998, 1997; Olson, 2001). However, a balanced account of the public relations process must also consider the goals of publics, the interaction between the goals of publics and the goals of organizations, and the impact of this interaction on public relations outcomes. The following section examines the general characteristics and functions of goals in an attempt to understand how goals are related to the public relations behavior of organizations.

Goals in Public Relations

Although references to goals are scattered throughout the public relations literature, public relations scholars have failed to satisfactorily explicate the construct. This is problematic, given the value the discipline has placed on goals (organizational goals,

public relations goals, communication goals, relational goals) and goal achievement.

Fortunately, interpersonal and organizational communication scholars have been focused on the goal construct for some time.

According to Dillard (1997), a “landslide” of work attesting to the importance of the goal construct in theories of interpersonal communication has surfaced over the past two decades (p. 47). Some scholars have focused on illuminating the nature (Craig, 1986) or the substance of goals (Cody, Canary, & Smith, 1994). Others have examined the operation of goals in contexts such as bargaining and negotiation (Donohue & Diez, 1985; Wilson & Putnam, 1990), conversational retreat (Kellermann, Reynolds, & Chen, 1991), and interpersonal influence (Dillard, 1990a). In addition, research concerning how goals shape message output has generated considerable interest (Bingham & Burleson, 1989; Greene & Lindsey, 1989). Although the utility of the goal construct is apparent, scholars have been unable to universally define it (Dillard, 1997).

According to Locke & Latham (1990), a goal is a generic concept that is typically conceived of cognitively as that which leads to the formation of plans or strategies to achieve desired ends. Dillard (1990b) stated that goals are widely accepted as primary guides to human action and viable explanations for human behavior. Most commonsense beliefs about human action are grounded in the dualistic assumption that an individual's external behaviors are, for the most part, guided or directed by the individual's internal mental processes (Rorty, 1979). Such internal processes are not directly observable and are typically identified as objectives, motives, intentions, plans, purposes, wants, and reasons, among others (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Despite the difficulty in defining goals, it is possible to examine general characteristics of goals. Dillard (1997) explicated the goal construct into five conceptual characteristics important to theorists: consciousness, commitment, structure, substance, and specificity. Consciousness is the degree to which an individual is aware of a goal. Goals may exist outside of conscious awareness, as with habit formation, or an individual may possess heightened awareness of a goal, particularly if the goal is considered important. Commitment refers to an individual's will or determination to reach a goal and typically increases the likelihood of goal attainment. Structure refers to the position of a goal in relation to other goals. It is typically understood that goals exist in a hierarchical relationship to one another, with some goals existing as subgoals of others. Higher-order goals are more likely to be achieved than lower-order goals; however, social actors often possess and attempt to achieve multiple goals simultaneously. Substance refers to whether the goal is: (1) cognitive, affective, or behavioral; (2) framed as approach (positive) or avoidance (negative); and (3) outcome (what is being accomplished) or process (how it is being accomplished). Specificity is the degree of quantitative precision with which a goal is defined.

These concepts appear in the organizational communication literature as well, although the terminology varies. Mintzberg (1983) defines goals as “the intentions behind decisions or actions, the states of mind that drive individuals or collectivities of individuals called organizations to do what they do” (p. 5). An organization can be said to have a goal to the extent that there is some consistency in the intentions behind the decisions made and actions taken by its participants; i.e., the organization pursues a certain outcome consistently. Mintzberg identified two primary characteristics of

organizational goals: consistency in and intendedness of organizational behavior. A range of intended consistency is possible within organizations; however, there are four kinds of organizational goals that have strong intended consistency across whole ranges of behavior over time.

First are the formal goals, which can in fact be the formal manifestations of the other three kinds of goals. The formal goals are the easiest to uncover because these are the ones operationalized in the control systems. However, as noted, care must be taken to ensure that these are actually pursued and so stand as true goals of the organization. Second are the ideological goals, usually tied to mission. While these are not formalized, when strong they may be clearly indicated in the established traditions of the organization. Third are the systems goals—survival, efficiency, control, and growth—which are typically present, more or less, in all organizations. These tend to be easy to uncover, because they are typically reflected in a wide range of organizational actions. Finally, there are the shared personal goals of the influencers. These may be the most difficult to uncover because they tend to vary considerably between organizations and may not be articulated. (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 253)

Mintzberg (1983) stated that many of these kinds of goals coexist in most organizations, often conflicting with one another. When a number of goals vie for preeminence, some mechanism for reconciling them must be found. One logical method is sequential attention, with each goal attended to periodically. The pattern of attention to different goals may be random or organized. Sometimes two or more goals are attended to alternately—in cycles—and sometimes a number of them are attended to in a hierarchy of higher-order and lower-order goals. Mintzberg concluded that a multitude of patterns among goals exist and that empirical research is needed to discover how organizations reconcile their multiple goals.

From a public relations perspective, environmental factors are critical to organizational goal reconciliation. Organizations exist within an environment made up of publics that are impacted by organizational action. Organizational survival depends, in

part, on the ability of the organization to deal with a variety of publics (Gibson, 1980), and understanding all publics is vital to recognizing and selecting issues that warrant planned organizational activity (Culbertson, Jeffers, Stone, & Terrell, 1993). Therefore, organizational goals must be looked at in terms of how they relate to the goals of relevant publics.

According to Mintzberg (1983), publics act as external influencers of organizations. Each public has distinct goals it wants to achieve through its relationship with an organization. Forrest and Mays (1997) stated that organizational communication programs need to reflect the goals of the organization as well as the goals of relevant publics to identify linkages and commonalities among the two that may present opportunities to initiate positive communication. However, the goals of publics are sometimes fundamentally different than the goals of the organization and conflict often results. Identifying goals and objectives on which a public and an organization are opposed can help an organization understand the types of information it needs to develop or the accommodations it must make to address these differences.

This illustrates the need for an organization to examine the level of goal compatibility it has with each of its publics in order to enact effective strategies for communicating with each group. Goal compatibility is the extent to which the goals or objectives of one party are similar to and coincide with the goals and objectives of another party (Page & Hazleton, 1999). According to Page, public relations strategy selection is most effective when goal compatibility between an organization and its publics is considered (Hazleton, 1992; Page, 2000a, 2000b; Page & Hazleton, 1999).

According to Page (2000a), goal compatibility can be conceptualized as an attribute of publics that represents the degree to which members of a public perceive their goals to be similar to and coincide with the goals of an organization. Organizations can determine the perceived goal compatibility of publics during the research and analysis phase of the public relations process, and use this information to strategically communicate with these groups. Page argued that, if members of a public perceive that an organization's goals are similar to their own, they will likely be more receptive to messages output from the organization. Conversely, a public may resist messages if its goals are not aligned with those of the organization (Page & Hazleton, 1999; Page, 2000a, 2000b).

Although the concept of goal compatibility, as defined here, has only recently been a topic of public relations research, similar concepts have appeared in public relations and related literature. Public relations references have generally been made in research concerning the situational theory. Cameron and Yang (1990) and Slater et al. (1992) argued that 'valence of support' should be added to the situational theory since the degree to which publics see a problem positively or negatively determines the effect messages have on them. Slater et al. suggested that a valence be attached to problem recognition and level of involvement after finding that the variables were more predictive when the publics' positive or negative cognitive responses to message content were considered. This finding is in line with cognitive response theory, which defines thought valence as the proportion of positive versus negative thoughts generated by messages (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). Wright (1986) argued that positive thoughts, such as support arguments and source bolstering, are a necessary condition for the acceptance of persuasive messages. In addition, Hallahan (2000a) stated that messages are more effective when

“audiences identify a *goal congruity* between themselves and the source” (p. 470).

However, he did not elaborate on this concept.

The lack of similar goals, or goal incompatibility, has been identified as a primary characteristic of bargaining and negotiation strategies in interpersonal communication (Vasquez, 1996; Putnam & Roloff, 1992). According to Vasquez (1996),

Parties in a negotiation are perceived to hold different interests or goals. Each party has the ability to constrain or prevent the other from attaining a goal. Within a framework of competition, negotiators must cooperate to reach individual goals in such a way that one party's gain is the other's loss. (p. 60)

Other interpersonal communication scholars have examined the concept of compatibility in relationships, which is particularly relevant to public relations. According to Ickes (1985), a relationship is compatible if its members are congruous (they mesh or fit together), accordant (they are in harmony or in sync with each other), or agreeing (they share common attitudes, goals, and feelings). In contrast, a relationship is incompatible if its members are incongruous (they do not mesh or fit together), discordant (they are out of harmony or out of sync with each other), or disagreeing (they do not share common attitudes, goals, feelings, etc.). In addition, a compatible relationship suggests that members make an active, intentional attempt to understand and accommodate each other and have a mutual willingness to share and suffer together.

Deutsch (1969) stated that relationships characterized by cooperation and open communication indicate low levels of conflict, or high compatibility, between parties. Conversely, relationships characterized by competition and little or no communication indicate high levels of conflict, or low compatibility, between parties.

This review of literature suggests the value of goal compatibility to public relations theory and research. However, the concept has been minimally explored. Similarly, only

three studies have used the theoretical framework posited by Hazleton and Long's Public Relations Process Model to examine public relations strategy use in organizations.

This study seeks to replicate and extend previous research by examining how the attributes of problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, and goal compatibility are related to use of informative, persuasive, facilitative, and cooperative problem solving strategies in organizations and the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving organizational goals. Therefore, a detailed review of the studies that have explored these concepts is warranted.

Linking Public Relations Strategies and Attributes of Publics

Although empirical research using Hazleton and Long's Public Relations Process Model is limited, several studies have examined concepts central to the model. Specifically, studies have been undertaken to validate Hazleton's public relations strategy taxonomy by measuring the frequency of strategy use in organizations, the influence of attributes of publics on strategy use and effectiveness, and the impact of goals on public relations behavior in organizations.

Three studies have been conducted that measure the frequency of strategy use in organizations. In the first empirical study using the strategy taxonomy, Page and Hazleton (1999) surveyed members (n=111) of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) via direct mail to measure strategy use in the implementation of public relations campaigns. Using a repeated measures design, the survey instrument provided a definition of each of the seven strategies and then asked practitioners to rate their use of the strategy using a 5-point scale anchored by the statements, *This organization has frequently used this strategy*, and *This organization has never used this strategy*. Page and Hazleton found significant differences in frequency of strategy use across strategies

and reported that strategy type accounted for approximately 40% of the variance in frequency of strategy use measures, $F(6,564)=63.753, p=.000$. Specifically, the study found that organizations use persuasive strategies most frequently. Informative strategies were found to be the second most frequently used, followed by cooperative problem solving and facilitative strategies. Promise and reward, bargaining, and threat and punishment strategies were found to be the least frequently used by practitioners.

Two subsequent studies measuring frequency of strategy use produced similar results. In one study, Page (2000a) surveyed public relations practitioners who were members of the PRSA Counselor's Academy using an on-line questionnaire. Frequency of strategy use results indicated that the informative strategy was used most often in the implementation of public relations campaigns. Specifically, the informative strategy was used 48.8% of the time. Practitioners reported using the persuasive strategy 18.8% of the time, the cooperative problem solving strategy 14.6 % of the time, and the facilitative strategy 12.2% of the time. The promise and reward strategy was used 4.9% of the time and the threat and punishment strategy was used only 1.2% of the time. No use of the bargaining strategy was reported.

In another study, Page (2000b) conducted a content analysis of public relations strategy use in 100 randomly selected press releases distributed by organizations via the PRNewswire Web site (www.prnewswire.com). Results indicated that the informative strategy ($n=40$) was used most frequently in press releases. The persuasive strategy ($n=34$) was the second most frequently used strategy, followed by the facilitative strategy ($n=11$), the cooperative problem solving strategy ($n=8$), the threat and punishment strategy ($n=4$), the promise and reward strategy ($n=2$), and the bargaining strategy ($n=1$).

A summary of the findings of these three studies is provided in Table 1. The results suggest a goodness of fit between the public relations strategies defined in Hazleton's taxonomy and the actual strategies used by organizations in the implementation of public relations campaigns. Furthermore, the finding that frequency of strategy use varies across strategies indicates that organizations use the strategies differently.

Table 1: Rank ordering for frequency of strategy use in previous research

Page & Hazleton (1999)	Page (2000a)	Page (2000b)
Persuasive	Informative	Informative
Informative	Persuasive	Persuasive
Cooperative Problem Solving	Cooperative Problem Solving	Facilitative
Facilitative	Facilitative	Cooperative Problem Solving
Promise and Reward	Promise and Reward	Threat and Punishment
Bargaining	Threat and Punishment	Promise and Reward
Threat and Punishment	Bargaining	Bargaining

Page and Hazleton's (1999) study also examined the relationship between attributes of publics, strategy use in organizations, and strategy effectiveness in achieving organizational goals. They developed nine statements to measure the attributes of problem recognition, constraint recognition, level of involvement, and goal compatibility. To measure problem recognition, two statements were used: 1) The public recognized the existence of a problem, and 2) The public saw the problem the same way as my organization. To measure constraint recognition, two statements were used: 1) The public felt it could not solve the problem, and 2) The public was not materially or politically powerful. To measure level of involvement, two statements were used: 1) The members

of the public were personally affected by the problem, and 2) The members of the public were concerned, but not for themselves. Finally, one statement was used to measure goal compatibility: The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization.

In addition, Page and Hazleton included two statements to measure the dependent variables of the situational theory of publics. To measure the information seeking behavior of publics, the following statement was used: The public was actively seeking information. To measure the information processing behavior of publics, the following statement was used: The members of the public consumed information given to them but did not actively seek it out.

Page and Hazleton found that attributes of publics were significant predictors of strategy use in organizations, $F(27,26)=2.547, p=.01$. Strategy type accounted for 72.6% of the variance in attributes of publics across strategies. Further statistical analysis of the four most frequently used strategies indicated the following relationships:

- When the informative strategy is used, the public is significantly less likely to see the problem the same way as the organization than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used. In addition, when the informative strategy is used, the goals of the public are significantly less likely to be compatible with the goals of the organization than when the cooperative problem solving and facilitative strategies are used.
- When the facilitative strategy is used, the public is significantly less likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used. The public is also less likely to be actively seeking information than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used.

However, the public is more likely to consume information given to them, but not actively seek it out, than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used. In addition, when the facilitative strategy is used, the public is significantly more likely to see the problem the same way as the organization, be personally affected by the situation, and have goals that are compatible with the goals of the organization than when the persuasive strategy is used. The public also is significantly more likely to have goals that are compatible with the organization's goals when the facilitative strategy is used than when the informative strategy is used.

- When the persuasive strategy is used, the public is significantly less likely to recognize the existence of a problem, see the problem the same way as the organization, and actively seek information than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used. Also, the public is significantly less likely to see the problem the same way as the organization, be personally affected by the situation, and have goals that are compatible with the organization's goals when persuasive strategies are used than when facilitative strategies are used.
- When the cooperative problem solving strategy is used, the public is significantly more likely to recognize the existence of a problem and actively seek information than when facilitative or persuasive strategies are used. The public is also significantly more likely to see the problem the same way as the organization when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used than when the informative or persuasive strategies are used. In addition, the goals of the public are more likely to be compatible with the goals of the organization

when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used than when the informative strategy is used. However, the public is less likely to consume information when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used than when the facilitative strategy is used.

In addition, Page and Hazleton's (1999) study produced information about the relationship between attributes of publics and public relations strategy effectiveness. Specifically, results indicated the following for the four most frequently used strategies:

- The analysis of data for the informative strategy revealed that two independent variables were significant predictors of strategy effectiveness. These variables were positive predictors of informative strategy effectiveness. In order of significance, they are: 1) The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization, and 2) The public saw the problem the same way as my organization. These predictors accounted for 26.1% of the unique variance in informative strategy effectiveness ($R=.510$, $R^2=.260$).
- The analysis of data for the facilitative strategy revealed that two independent variables were significant predictors of strategy effectiveness. These variables were found to be positive predictors of effectiveness when the facilitative strategy is used. In order of significance, they are: 1) The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization, and 2) The public was actively seeking information. These predictors accounted for 25.3% of the unique variance in effectiveness of the facilitative strategy ($R=.503$, $R^2=.253$).
- The analysis of data for the persuasive strategy revealed that one independent variable was a significant predictor of strategy effectiveness. The measure of

goal compatibility was found to be a positive predictor of effectiveness when the persuasive strategy is used. This predictor accounted for 29.2% of the unique variance in persuasive strategy effectiveness ($R=.540$, $R^2=.292$).

- The analysis of data for the cooperative problem solving strategy revealed that two attributes of publics were significant predictors of strategy effectiveness. These variables were found to be significant predictors of effectiveness when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used: 1) The public recognized the existence of a problem, and 2) The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization. These predictors accounted for 35.6% of the unique variance in cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness ($R=.597$, $R^2=.356$).

Page and Hazleton used these results to propose the foundation of a positive theory of public relations strategy use that could be tested in future research. They presented the following hypotheses as the basis for their theory:

- H1: An informative strategy is indicated when the public is perceived as having low problem recognition and low goal compatibility.
- H2: A facilitative strategy is indicated when the public is perceived as having moderate problem recognition, high goal compatibility, high involvement, and is not actively seeking information.
- H3: A persuasive strategy is indicated when the public is perceived as having low problem recognition, low goal compatibility, low involvement, and is actively seeking information.
- H4: A cooperative problem-solving strategy is indicated when the public is perceived as having high problem recognition, high goal compatibility, and is actively seeking information.
- H5: The informative strategy will be more effective when publics exhibit low goal compatibility and low problem recognition.

- H6: The facilitative strategy will be more effective when publics exhibit high goal compatibility and are not actively seeking information.
- H7: The persuasive strategy will be more effective when publics exhibit low goal compatibility.
- H8: The cooperative problem-solving strategy will be more effective when publics exhibit high problem recognition and high goal compatibility.
- H9: The promise and reward strategy will be more effective when publics exhibit high goal compatibility.
- H10: The threat and punishment strategy will be more effective when publics exhibit high goal compatibility and high level of involvement.

The hypotheses proposed by Page and Hazleton can be more concisely represented in the form of two tables. Table 2 represents the perceived attributes of publics when public relations strategies are used in organizations. Table 3 represents the perceived attributes of publics when public relations strategies are effective in achieving organizational goals.

Page and Hazleton argued that goal compatibility functions as a primary predictor of strategy effectiveness, since it was found to be the primary contributor to unique variance in effectiveness for five of the strategies tested. According to the authors, the attribute of goal compatibility becomes even more important when organizations have a limited capacity to process information. "Under conditions that limit an organization's capacity to evaluate multiple attributes of publics, goal compatibility may function as a primary factor in both strategy use and effectiveness" (1999, p. 23).

Page (2000a) conducted follow-up research to develop a better understanding of goal compatibility and how it relates to public relations. She found that goal compatibility positively correlated with relationships characterized by cooperation ($r=.617, p=.000$) and open communication ($r=.442, p=.000$). Results also indicated a significant positive correlation between goal compatibility and strategy effectiveness ($r=.412, p=.000$).

Table 2: Relationship of attributes of publics and public relations strategy use

Strategy Type	Problem Recognition	Constraint Recognition	Level of Involvement	Goal Compatibility	Information Seeking
Informative	Low			Low	
Facilitative	Moderate		High	High	Low
Persuasive	Low		Low	Low	High
Cooperative Problem Solving	High			High	High

Table 3: Relationship of attributes of publics and strategy effectiveness

Strategy Type	Problem Recognition	Constraint Recognition	Level of Involvement	Goal Compatibility	Information Seeking
Informative	Low			Low	
Facilitative				High	Low
Persuasive				Low	
Cooperative Problem Solving	High			High	

The findings of the studies reviewed here suggest an area of public relations scholarship in need of further investigation. Preliminary results suggest that the public relations strategy taxonomy proposed by Hazleton provides a useful framework for understanding the message variable in the public relations process. In an attempt to provide further validation for the taxonomy, as well as extend research on attributes of publics, the current study seeks to replicate and extend Page and Hazleton's 1999 study. Specifically, the current study builds on the 1999 work by attempting to provide further support for a positive theory of public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations.

Purpose and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to contribute to theory-driven research in public relations by conducting an empirical analysis of the influence of attributes of publics on public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations. Specifically, this study seeks to replicate and extend previous research by examining how the attributes of problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, and goal compatibility are related to use of informative, persuasive, facilitative, and cooperative problem solving strategies in organizations and the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving organizational goals. In accomplishing this objective, this study attempts to provide a foundation for the development of a positive theory of public relations strategy use in organizations that links the message and receiver variables inherent to the public relations process. This objective is accomplished by empirically testing the following hypotheses and related propositions:

- H1: In the implementation of public relations campaigns, informative and persuasive strategies are used more frequently than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies.
- H2: Perceived attributes of publics influence public relations strategy use in organizations.
 - P2.1: When informative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition and low goal compatibility.
 - P2.2: When facilitative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having moderate problem recognition, high goal compatibility, high involvement, and information processing behavior.
 - P2.3: When persuasive strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition, low goal compatibility, low involvement, and information seeking behavior.
 - P2.4: When cooperative problem-solving strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having high problem recognition, high goal compatibility, and information seeking behavior.

H3: Perceived attributes of publics are predictors of public relations strategy effectiveness.

P3.1: Informative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition.

P3.2: Facilitative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and information processing behavior.

P3.3: Persuasive strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility.

P3.4: Cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition.

In addition to the primary objective of this study, a secondary objective is to develop a greater understanding of how goal compatibility functions as an attribute of publics. Specifically, this research seeks to determine if goal compatibility is related to the independent and dependent variables of the situational theory of publics. Thus, it explores the following research questions:

RQ1: Is goal compatibility related to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement in publics?

RQ2: Does goal compatibility influence the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics?

This chapter provided a review of literature relevant to public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations. Chapter 3 provides a detailed review of the methods and procedures used to gather and analyze the data for this study.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study is to contribute to theory-driven research in public relations by conducting an empirical analysis of the influence of attributes of publics on public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations. Specifically, this study seeks to replicate and extend previous research by examining how the attributes of problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, and goal compatibility are related to use of informative, persuasive, facilitative, and cooperative problem solving strategies in organizations and the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving organizational goals.

In accomplishing this objective, this study attempts to provide a foundation for the development of a positive theory of public relations strategy use in organizations that links the message and receiver variables in the public relations process. This objective is accomplished by empirically testing the following hypotheses and related propositions:

- H1: In the implementation of public relations campaigns, informative and persuasive strategies are used more frequently than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies.
- H2: Perceived attributes of publics influence public relations strategy use in organizations.
 - P2.1: When informative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition and low goal compatibility.
 - P2.2: When facilitative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having moderate problem recognition, high goal compatibility, high involvement, and information processing behavior.

- P2.3: When persuasive strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition, low goal compatibility, low involvement, and information seeking behavior.
- P2.4: When cooperative problem-solving strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having high problem recognition, high goal compatibility, and information seeking behavior.
- H3: Perceived attributes of publics are predictors of public relations strategy effectiveness.
 - P3.1: Informative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition.
 - P3.2: Facilitative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and information processing behavior.
 - P3.3: Persuasive strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility.
 - P3.4: Cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition.

In addition, a secondary objective of this study is to develop a greater understanding of how goal compatibility functions as an attribute of publics. Specifically, this research seeks to explore the relationship between goal compatibility and the independent and dependent variables of the situational theory of publics. Thus, it examines the following research questions:

- RQ1: Is goal compatibility related to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement in publics?
- RQ2: Does goal compatibility influence the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics?

This chapter describes the methods and procedures used to examine these hypotheses, propositions, and research questions. It explains the research design, instrumentation, sampling, data collection, pretest, response statistics, and data analysis for this study.

Research Design

A survey of public relations practitioners was conducted to measure public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations. It was assumed that practitioners possess unique knowledge of public relations strategy use in organizations, since their role typically involves strategy development and/or execution (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000). A survey was considered appropriate because it is “a method of collecting information directly from members of a population” (Austin & Pinkleton, 2001, p. 160) and is “used to investigate problems in realistic settings” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 161). In addition, surveys are flexible, which contributes to their widespread use in the social sciences.

The survey used in this study was both descriptive and analytical in nature and used a repeated measures design to allow analysis of four public relations strategies simultaneously. Systematic random sampling methods were used to select a sample from the population of interest, and direct mail and online modes of survey administration were used to collect data. The survey instrument and all supporting materials for each mode of administration are included in Appendix A (direct mail) and Appendix B (online) of this study. The following section describes the instrumentation in detail.

Instrumentation

The instrument used to measure the variables of interest employed a repeated measures design. Specifically, the instrument measured practitioner perceptions of frequency of strategy use, attributes of publics related to strategy use, and strategy effectiveness across four strategies. The introduction to the instrument explained the purpose of the research and provided the following instructions for responding to the items:

On the following pages, four communication strategies are described that your organization may have used: informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving. Following the description of each strategy, you are asked to rate how often the strategy is used by your organization by checking the appropriate space on the scale provided. Next, you will be asked to recall a specific instance in which your organization used the strategy and respond to statements about the target public your message was directed to. If you work for a public relations firm or advertising agency, please recall a specific client you worked for and the client's target public. Finally, you are asked to provide demographic information about you and your organization. Please answer as candidly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Thank you for participating in this research!

The instrument contained items that measured the variables of interest and collected demographic information from practitioners. These items are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Frequency of Strategy Use

To test frequency of strategy use, respondents were given a definition of each public relations strategy and asked to rate how often the strategy was used by their organization. Responses were recorded on a 7-point scale anchored by the statements: *My organization has frequently used this strategy*, and *My organization has never used this strategy*. The operationalization of each strategy is provided in Table 4.

This method of testing frequency of strategy use has been employed successfully in previous research (Page & Hazleton, 1999; Page 2000a). It is designed to examine the unique usage characteristics of the public relations strategies described in Hazleton's taxonomy. If responses to these measures are consistent with previous research, the validity of the taxonomy and the reliability of its operationalization are strengthened. Responses to frequency measures were used to test Hypothesis 1 and 2, as well as Propositions 1 through 5.

Table 4: Operationalization of public relations strategies

Strategy Type	Operationalization
Informative Strategy	An informative/education strategy is based on the presentation of unbiased facts. Informative messages do not draw conclusions but presume that the target public will infer appropriate conclusions from accurate data. Informative messages may suggest a variety of alternative solutions to problems and are characterized by the use of neutral language.
Facilitative Strategy	A facilitative strategy is accomplished by making resources available to members of a public that allow them to act in ways that they are already predisposed to act. Resources may be tangible artifacts, such as tools or money (i.e. a postage paid return envelope), or they may be directions that tell someone how to accomplish a particular action (i.e. a directional billboard).
Persuasive Strategy	Persuasive strategies are characterized by appeals to a public's values or emotions. These messages may include a selective presentation of information and use language that is not neutral. They reflect the importance of the issue to the organization and the involvement of the organization in the situation. Persuasive messages provide a call for action, either directly or indirectly.
Cooperative Problem Solving Strategy	Cooperative problem solving messages reflect a willingness to jointly define problems and solutions to problems. These messages are characterized by an open exchange of information to establish common goals and to share responsibilities about the situation. These messages create a sense of interdependence between an organization and its public and use inclusive language, such as 'we.'

Attributes of Publics

For each of the four public relations strategies examined in this study, practitioners were asked to respond to 16 items measuring attributes of publics. Specifically, respondents were asked to recall a recent instance when their organization used the strategy and to rate the degree to which each item described the attributes of the

organization's target public. Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Responses to these measures were used in tests of Hypotheses 2 and 3, their related propositions, and to explore the research questions pertaining to goal compatibility.

Six attributes of publics were measured in this study. Specifically, items were developed to measure the variables of problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, information seeking, information processing, and goal compatibility. The first five attributes reflect the independent and dependent variables of the situational theory of publics. The attribute of goal compatibility is a variable posited by Page and Hazleton (1999).

To measure the situational theory's independent variables of problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement, a combination of items was used. Specifically, items that showed significance in Page and Hazleton's (1999) study were replicated in this study. These items were based on J. E. Grunig's (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) original conceptualization of the variables, which he stated reflect the external perceptions publics have of real situations. J. E. Grunig subsequently extended the theory to include internal components of the three variables, which he said reflect the internal cognitions publics have of the environment (1997; J. E. Grunig & Childers, 1988). According to J. E. Grunig (1997), the significance of the internal/external distinction lies in the relationship of cognitions and perceptions to behavior. If the concepts are cognitive, the behavior produced by the cognitions can be influenced directly through communication designed to change the cognitions. However, if the concepts are perceptions of real world

conditions, real changes must be made in the environment before perceptions of the situation change and behavior can be influenced.

Because this distinction has important implications for public relations strategy use in organizations, original items were developed for this study to reflect the external and internal components of problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement (see J. E. Grunig, 1997).

The following items were used to measure external and internal problem recognition:

1. The public recognized the existence of a problem. (external; Page & Hazleton, 1999)
2. The public thought the situation was serious. (external)
3. The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better. (internal)

The following items were used to measure external and internal constraint recognition:

4. The public could not solve the problem. (external; Page & Hazleton, 1999)
5. There were constraints, or obstacles, that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation. (external)
6. The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it. (internal)

The following items were used to measure external and internal involvement:

7. The members of the public were personally affected by the problem. (external; Page & Hazleton, 1999)
8. The public was highly involved in the situation. (external)
9. The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation. (internal)

The instrument also included items designed to measure the situational theory's dependent variables of information seeking and information processing. These items were included to test the theory, as well as to determine the influence of active and passive communication behavior on strategy use and effectiveness. Again, items that

showed significance in Page and Hazleton's (1999) study were replicated. In addition, new items were developed to reflect measures typically used by J. E. Grunig (1997).

The following items were used to measure information seeking behavior:

10. The public was actively seeking information about the situation. (Page & Hazleton, 1999)
11. The members of the public sought information from my organization about the situation.

The following items were used to measure information processing behavior:

12. The members of the public consumed information given to them, but did not actively seek it out. (Page & Hazleton, 1999)
13. The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.

In addition to the attributes of publics identified in the situational theory of publics, goal compatibility has been identified as an attribute of publics that influences strategy use and effectiveness in organizations (Page & Hazleton, 1999; Page, 2000a; 2000b). To increase the reliability of the goal compatibility measure used in this study, an index was developed using three items. The single-item measure used in Page and Hazleton's study was replicated and two similar items were included, one of which was reversed.

The following items were used to measure goal compatibility:

14. The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization. (Page & Hazleton, 1999)
15. The public wanted the same thing my organization wanted.
16. My organization and the public had different goals. (reversed)

Public Relations Strategy Effectiveness

Although this study does not attempt to explicate public relations effectiveness, a brief discussion of the concept is warranted here to understand how it was measured in this study. Hon (1997) stated that despite the lack of a widely agreed upon definition of public

relations effectiveness, the concept can be assessed at four levels. The individual level deals with the effectiveness of practitioners in achieving what is expected of them. The program level measures effectiveness as the degree to which public relations activities produce intended results. The organizational level considers the extent to which public relations contributes to the mission and goals of an organization, or “the bottom line” (p. 5). Finally, the societal level takes a systems approach, assessing public relations’ role in helping an organization adjust to its environment.

A primary objective of this study was to test the effectiveness of public relations strategies in achieving organizational goals, which implies measurement at the organizational level. However, this study measured practitioner perceptions of strategy effectiveness for a specific campaign. Thus, responses inherently reflect practitioners’ perceptions of their own performance (individual level) and the results produced by the campaign (program level). In addition, if assessment of strategy effectiveness includes the degree to which outcomes are favorable for the public, it would seem to address effectiveness at the societal level.

As such, six items were used to measure public relations strategy effectiveness in this study. The items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). To create a balanced measure of effectiveness, three items measured strategy effectiveness in achieving organizational goals, and three items measured strategy effectiveness in achieving the goals of the target public. For the organizational index, the single-item measure of strategy effectiveness used in Page and Hazleton’s (1999) study was replicated. In addition, two similarly worded items were included to increase measurement reliability.

Three items measured strategy effectiveness in achieving organizational goals:

1. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of my organization.
2. My organization got what it wanted when this strategy was used.
3. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for my organization.

Three similar items measured strategy effectiveness in achieving the public's goals:

4. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of the public.
5. The public got what it wanted when this strategy was used.
6. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for the public.

Of course, items 4 through 6 above are questionable because responses reflect practitioner's perceptions of strategy effectiveness in achieving the goals of the public. However, they may provide new information about the role of the practitioner as a boundary spanner between the organization and its environment. At the very least, they represent an attempt to provide a balanced measure of effectiveness. Responses to the strategy effectiveness measures were used in tests of Hypothesis 3 and Propositions 3.1 through 3.4.

Demographics

Practitioners were asked eight demographic questions. Categorical level variables included gender, accreditation status, position/title, salary, education, and organization type. Continuous variables included tenure in current position and years of experience in public relations. The response categories for categorical variables used in this study matched those used by PRSA to collect demographic information from members.

The operationalization of variables in this study produced 23 items for each of the four strategies and eight demographic items, resulting in a 100-item questionnaire. The next section describes the sampling procedures used to select participants for this study.

Sampling Procedures

To measure public relations practitioner perceptions of strategy use and effectiveness, members of the Public Relations Society of America were selected as the population of interest. PRSA is the world's largest organization of public relations professionals, with nearly 20,000 members who represent corporations, counseling firms, not-for-profit organizations, government agencies, hospitals, educational institutions, associations, and professional service firms (PRSA Web site, June, 2002).

The PRSA Membership Register (2000-2001), known as *The Blue Book*, was used as the sample frame for this study. The register lists the name, title, employing organization, and contact information for all members of PRSA. The contact information for each member varies, but generally includes a mailing address, telephone number, fax number, and email address. In addition, the register lists the accreditation status of members.

Austin & Pinkleton (2001) and Dillman (2000) reported that, for a population of 20,000, a final sample size of 377 is needed to produce findings with a +/-5% margin of error at a 95% confidence level. Therefore, 377 was set as the minimum number of questionnaire responses needed to produce meaningful results.

Previous research, however, indicates low response rates for surveys using this sample frame. Page and Hazleton (1999) reported a 22.2% response rate for their direct mail survey of 500 PRSA members. Page (2000a) reported a 27.8% response rate for her online survey of 468 members of the PRSA Counselor's Academy. Therefore, the survey

response rate was projected to be approximately 30%, and an oversampling strategy was used. This resulted in a sample of 1,150.

The names of 1,150 public relations practitioners were randomly drawn from *The Blue Book* using a systematic sampling method with a random start. Systematic random sampling was appropriate because no periodicity (i.e., a characteristic that appears with the same frequency as the selected sampling interval) existed in the ordering of listings in the register. However, members are listed in alphabetical order, so the sampling interval was calculated to ensure full coverage of the sample frame. The geographical parameters of this study were limited to the United States, so practitioners who listed a postal address outside of the United States were excluded from the sample. In addition, educators and retirees were excluded from the sample, since they are less likely to practice public relations. The next section describes the procedures used to collect data for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to maintain the representativeness of the sample and accommodate the resource constraints of the researcher, a mixed-mode approach was used to collect data for this study. Mixed-mode surveys are used most frequently to reduce costs, but they can also reduce nonresponse, improve coverage, improve measurement, and be more convenient (Dillman, 2000). According to Dillman, obtaining questionnaire responses from some members of a sample by one method and other members by a second method is the most common use of mixed-mode surveys. “The use of different survey modes is usually justified by a desire to cut cost through use of the least expensive mode first” (2000, p. 219). The second mode is then used to reach people who could not be reached through the first mode.

In this study, the use of a large sample required a mode of administration that balanced cost and time constraints with the appropriateness of the mode to the sample frame. An inspection of the contact information provided by PRSA members indicated that most practitioners in the sample (77.8%) listed an email address. This presented an opportunity to reach these practitioners using Internet-based survey methods.

According to Couper (2000), the use of Internet-based surveys is increasing rapidly, mainly because researchers can access large numbers of respondents much quicker and at a much lower cost than with traditional administration methods. Dillman (2000) stated that electronic survey methods offer important efficiencies to the design and administration of self-administered questionnaires, including “nearly complete elimination of paper, postage, mailout, and data entry costs” (p. 352). In addition, response time is greatly reduced, and costs to add additional participant are much less than with traditional modes.

Due to the benefits offered by online administration, this mode was used to survey PRSA member in the sample who listed an email address (n=895). PRSA members who did not list an email address (n=255) were surveyed via direct mail. This served to maintain the randomness of the sample and allowed comparison of new and traditional modes of administration.

According to Dillman (2000), one important problem stemming from mixed-mode surveys is the possibility that people respond differently to items as a result of the mode used. This can be minimized through the use of unimode construction. Unimode construction is the “writing and presenting of questions to respondents in a way that assures receipt by respondents of a common mental stimulus, regardless of survey mode”

(p. 232). Unimode construction was used to the extent possible in this study to prevent differences in response due to mode of administration. The instrumentation was identical across modes, and contacts (email messages and direct mail letters) for each mode contained similarly worded text. However, inherent differences exist between direct mail and online survey administration that deserve attention.

According to Couper (2000), sources of error are a concern in survey methodology in general; however, online survey administration presents greater challenges relating to coverage error, sampling error, measurement error, and nonresponse error. Coverage error is a function of the mismatch between the target population and the frame population, and it is presently the biggest threat to inference from online surveys (Couper, 2000). Essentially, coverage error occurs in probability samples when not every member of a population has an equal chance of being selected for participation in a study. This has been a significant problem with online surveys of the general population because not everyone has access to the Internet.

While coverage error refers to people missing from the sample frame, sampling error occurs during the process of selecting a sample from the frame. Sampling error arises from the fact that not all members of the sample frame are measured. If the selection process were repeated, a different set of sample names would be obtained (Couper, 2000). Thus, the selection process requires a means of identifying people in the frame. Because many Internet-based surveys have sought to measure the general population, and since there have been no concrete numbers or means of identifying people in the Web sample frame, sampling error has been a major concern.

In this study, coverage error and sampling error are not expected to be significant because the sample frame (PRSA members listed in *The Blue Book*) is known and identifiable. *The Blue Book* lists PRSA members alphabetically and provides contact information for all members and an email address for most members. Although email addresses are not provided for every member of PRSA, surveying members with no email address via direct mail reduces coverage error. In this way, all PRSA members have the same chance of being selected for participation.

Measurement error is also a common problem in surveys. Measurement error is the deviation of the answers of respondents from their true values on the measure (Couper, 2000). Measurement error in self-administered surveys can arise from the respondent in the form of lack of motivation, lack of comprehension, and/or deliberate distortions in responses. Measurement error also can stem from the instrument's wording and design. The importance of question wording in surveys is well-recognized; however, there is also a growing literature that suggests that the design of the survey instrument, including placement of questions, flow of instrument, and typographical features, plays an important role in survey response (Couper, Traugott, & Lamias, 1999; Dillman, Tortora, Conradt, & Bowker, 1998).

According to Couper (2000), the appearance of a survey on the Web can vary from respondent to respondent because of different browser settings, user preferences, and variations in hardware. In addition, design may be much more important to Internet-based surveys because there are more tools available to the designer, such as color, sound, images and animation, and because of variation in how these may be seen by respondents. Although there is little empirical work on optimal design for Web surveys,

Couper suggests that the appropriateness of a particular design be evaluated in the context of its intended goal and audience.

To minimize measurement error arising from respondents in the present study, instructions and items on the direct mail and online surveys were made as easy to understand and complete as possible. In addition, the request for participation and the survey itself were designed to keep respondents motivated to provide candid and accurate answers and reassure respondents regarding the confidentiality of their responses. To minimize measurement error stemming from the online instrument, the online survey was designed to ensure optimal compatibility with the most common Web browser software. Specifically, complicated graphics, sound, and animation were avoided to facilitate access and ease of use by respondents. In addition, the online survey was pretested for bugs and other factors that could impede respondent access prior to administration.

An additional problem with online surveys is the likelihood of participation from individuals not included in the sample frame. This problem was minimized by using a secure Web server and a unique URL (Web address) that was known only to participants in this study.

The final source of error in surveys stems from nonresponse. Nonresponse error arises when not all people included in the sample are willing or able to complete the survey. It is widely acknowledged that poor response rates have been a growing problem in survey research (Krosnick, 1999). Steehl (1981) stated that “heightened concern about privacy and confidentiality, a disillusionment with the uses of survey results, and overexposure to the survey process” have led to higher refusal rates and increased error due to nonresponse (p. 53). This trend continues today.

Unfortunately, direct mail and online surveys suffer from even lower response rates than other types of surveys. Mail surveys are known to have lower response rates than telephone and face-to-face surveys (Dillman, 1978). Kerlinger (1986) found that mail survey returns of less than 40% or 50% are common. Baruch (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of response rates for published mail surveys and found the average was 55.6%.

Furthermore, it has generally been found that electronic surveys have lower response rates than mail surveys (Dillman, 2000). In a meta-analysis conducted by Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000), the mean response rate for 68 online surveys was 39.9%. When surveys with missing data were omitted, the mean response rate dropped to 34.6%.

Although research on factors that influence response rates for online surveys is limited, a great deal of research has been devoted to developing techniques for improving mail survey response rates (Dillman, 2000; Fox, Crask, & Kim, 1988). A review of literature suggests that mail survey response-inducing techniques can be grouped into issues related to the cover letter, incentive, respondent contacts, postage, and instrument.

Factors related to the cover letter used in mail surveys have been extensively studied. In general, it has been found that personalizing the cover letter and other correspondence increases response. This is achieved by using the respondents' first and last name, a real signature in contrasting ink, and stationery printed on high quality paper (Dillman, 2000). In addition, studies sponsored by a university have greater returns. Other factors related to cover letters include style, tone, format, length, visual presentation, and content; however, these depend largely on the characteristics of potential respondents.

Monetary and token incentives also increase response rates, but studies have shown that increases in monetary incentives have diminishing returns. In addition, incentives

included with the questionnaire are better than the promise of payment upon responding (Dillman, 2000).

Amount and type of respondent contact has also been investigated. Multiple contacts have been shown to be more effective than any other technique for increasing response to surveys by mail (Dillman, 1991, 2000). Recent research indicates that this is also true for online surveys (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998). The use of prenotification increases response rates because it establishes legitimacy and alerts the respondent that the survey is coming, which reduces the likelihood that it will be inadvertently discarded. In addition, response rate can be increased by using follow-up postcards thanking those who responded and reminding those who did not respond (Dillman, 2000; Fox et al, 1988). Similarly, number of contacts, personalized contacts, and precontacts also were found to be dominant factors affecting response rates in online surveys (Cook et al, 2000).

The type of postage used for mail surveys also has been found to influence response rate. Studies suggest that the use of first-class rather than bulk-rate outgoing postage increases response rates, as does the use of stamps instead of a postage meter (Fox et al, 1988). In addition, the use of a self-addressed return envelope with postage stamps instead of a prepaid business reply envelope is effective.

Issues related to the questionnaire include topic, length, and format. In general, the topic of the questionnaire should be salient to the respondent, the length should be as short as possible, and the format should be clear, easy to comprehend, and facilitate response (Fox et al, 1988).

Although research regarding online survey response rates is limited, several studies have found that Web-based surveys generally fail to achieve the response rates of mail

surveys (Couper, Blair, & Triplett, 1999; Schaefer & Dillman, 1998). According to Couper (2000), there are several reasons for this. First, the traditional motivating tools used to garner participation in mail surveys cannot be implemented in the same way in Web surveys, and functional equivalents are yet to be developed and tested. Second, technical difficulties may occur when participants attempt to access an online survey, thus discouraging some from completing it. Specifically, slow modem speeds, unreliable network connections, low-end browsers, and other delivery problems associated with new technology may inhibit online survey completion. These problems are intensified when surveys incorporate high-end visual and graphic elements. Finally, confidentiality issues may play a role in decreased participation in online surveys. Some organizations keep records of all incoming and outgoing messages, which could deter employees of such organizations from completing sensitive questionnaires.

To minimize potential bias due to nonresponse error in the present study, steps were taken specific to each mode of administration. The following sections provide a detailed review of the direct mail and online survey administration procedures used in this study.

Direct Mail Survey Administration

The survey instrument used in this study was administered to 255 randomly selected PRSA members via direct mail. In an effort to obtain a sufficient response rate for this study, three contacts were made with potential respondents. All contacts used altruistic compliance-gaining appeals intended to convince practitioners of the importance of the research and persuade them to participate in the study.

On July 10, 2001, a prenotification letter was sent to the direct mail sample. Each letter was personalized with the practitioner's first and last name, title, organization, and postal address. In addition, the letter was printed on high-quality stationery featuring the

letterhead of the sponsoring university. Each letter was hand-signed by the researcher and stamps were used for the outgoing postage. The prenotification letter contained the following text:

A few days from now, you will receive in the mail a request to fill out a brief questionnaire for an important research project being conducted by a doctoral student at the University of Florida. The questionnaire concerns the practice of public relations. Specifically, it investigates how organizations communicate and the types of publics (audiences) they communicate with.

I am writing in advance because many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. The study is an important one that will help public relations researchers and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies do not work will help us in our efforts to teach others.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the help of generous people like you that this research can be successful.

Four days after sending the prenotification letter, a direct mail survey package containing a cover letter, a 6-page questionnaire booklet, and a self-addressed stamped return envelope was mailed. As with the prenotification letter, the cover letter contained the practitioner's first and last name, title, organization, and postal address. The cover letter was printed on university letterhead and hand-signed by the researcher. The questionnaire booklets were numbered prior to mailing to track respondents and facilitate elimination of names for follow-up mailings. First-class stamps were used for outgoing postage. The cover letter contained an Informed Consent Statement required by the university's Institutional Review Board, as well as the following text:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida and a member of the Public Relations Society of America. I am writing to ask for your help in research that investigates how the characteristics of target publics (audiences) influence the use of communication strategies in organizations.

As a member of PRSA, you are part of a carefully selected sample of public relations practitioners who have been asked to assist with this survey. This study is an important one that will help public relations researchers and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies do not work will help in our efforts to teach others.

The enclosed questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete, and your responses will remain completely confidential. Your name will never be connected to your responses in any way. Please read the informed consent statement below for information on your rights as a participant in this study.

Your input is vital to this study. Scholarly research increases the professionalism of public relations and adds to its credibility as a behavioral science. Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire and returning it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thank you, in advance, for helping with this important study.

Seven days after the survey package was mailed, a reminder postcard was mailed to practitioners who had not responded to the survey. The text of the postcard follows:

Last week a questionnaire seeking your input about the practice of public relations was mailed to you. You were selected as part of a carefully chosen sample of public relations practitioners who are members of PRSA. If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, please accept my sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. I am especially grateful for your help because it is only by asking practitioners like you to share your experiences that we can understand why organizations communicate the way they do. If you did not receive a questionnaire, or if it was misplaced, please contact me at (352) 284-5496 or email kgpage@ufl.edu and I will send you another one.

It should be noted that no incentive was used in this study due to Institutional Review Board requirements. The response statistics for the direct mail sample are provided later in this chapter. The following section describes the procedures used to administer the online survey.

Online Survey Administration

Public relations practitioners (n=895) who listed an email address in *The Blue Book* were surveyed using an online mode of administration. The unimode strategy suggested by Dillman (2000) was used to construct the online survey. Specifically, the online instrument and supporting materials replicated the direct mail survey to the extent possible, while taking advantage of the design capabilities offered by the Web.

Microsoft FrontPage was used to convert the questionnaire to HTML format. Programming included addition of visual elements, hyperlinking, button construction, and response coding. The Web page was posted on the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications' secure Web server. The URL (Web address) for the site was <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey>, which added legitimacy to the survey by linking it to the sponsoring university.

To ensure the confidentiality of responses and avoid ethical issues related to collecting information unknown to respondents, online survey responses were not linked to email addresses in any way. This resulted in anonymous responses and prevented response tracking. Response tracking in online surveys is not as important as in mail surveys because no postage is needed for follow-up notices. However, this meant that practitioners who responded to the online survey continued to receive email follow-up contacts. This is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The survey site included four Web pages connected through hyperlinks that appeared as buttons. The first Web page served as an introduction page. The top of the page featured a headline in bold type that read, "How do organizations communicate and who are they communicating with?" This was followed by an explanation of the purpose of the survey, an expression of appreciation for participating, a statement of confidentiality,

and an email address to contact if problems occurred when completing the instrument. A button labeled “continue” led participants to the second page of the Web site.

The second Web page included instructions for completing the questionnaire. These were the same instructions used for the direct mail survey, except participants were told to use the mouse to click the appropriate response box. A button labeled “start” led participants to the third Web page, which contained the questionnaire.

The online instrument replicated the print version; however, it featured design elements intended to facilitate response. Each strategy definition was shown in a light gray box. The response scale used buttons shown beside every item; however, response category labels were shown every few statements to avoid repetition and conserve space. In addition, every other item was highlighted in gray to allow clear distinction between items, and a hyperlink was provided to “skip” to the next strategy if a strategy had never been used. Two buttons were provided at the end of the questionnaire. Respondents could choose to “submit” the questionnaire or “reset” it, which cleared all responses. When the submit button was selected, a final Web page appeared that thanked participants for their time. A final “exit” button on this page closed the Web browser window.

Graphic elements were included on the first two pages of the online survey. Specifically, a small oval graphic of the University of Florida tower was shown in orange and blue at the top of each page. In addition, an orange and blue stripe was positioned on the left side of each page. This served to perceptually link the survey to the sponsoring university and increase the esthetic appeal of the survey Web site.

Practitioners in the online survey were contacted four times. All contacts contained the words “Public Relations Research” in the subject field of the email message. On

Wednesday, September 5, 2001, practitioners received a prenotification email informing them of the purpose of the survey and alerting them to a future request for participation. The message contained a personalized header that included the practitioner's first and last name, title, and organization. The text of the email prenotification is provided below:

Early next week you will receive an email message requesting that you complete a brief online questionnaire for an important research project being conducted by a doctoral student at the University of Florida. The questionnaire concerns the practice of public relations. Specifically, it investigates how organizations communicate and the types of publics (audiences) they communicate with. I am writing in advance because many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. The study is an important one that will help public relations researchers and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies do not work will help us in our efforts to teach others. Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the help of generous people like you that this research can be successful.

Five days later, on Monday, September 10, practitioners received an email message requesting their participation in the survey. Each letter was personalized and asked practitioners to access the survey Web site and complete the items as candidly as possible. A hyperlink to the Web site was provided in the email transmission to facilitate connection to the site. The email included an Informed Consent Statement required by the Institutional Review Board, as well as the following text:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida and a member of the Public Relations Society of America. I am writing to ask for your help in research that investigates the practice of public relations.

As a member of PRSA, you are part of a carefully selected sample of public relations practitioners who have been asked to assist with this survey. This study is an important one that will help public relations researchers and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies do not work will help in our efforts to teach others.

The questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete, and your responses will remain completely confidential. Your name will never be connected to your responses in any way. Please read the informed consent statement for information on your rights as a participant in this study.

Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:
<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey/>

One week after the email request for participation, practitioners received a reminder email message. To add credibility to the request, the researcher's faculty position was stated in the message. The reminder message contained the following text:

Recently, I asked you to participate in research about the practice of public relations. As a practitioner, you are the most knowledgeable source of information about how public relations concepts are applied in the real world.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida, a faculty member at the University of South Florida and a member of PRSA. I am trying to gain a better understanding of the communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what works and what does not work will help in our efforts to teach others.

The informed consent statement below explains your rights as a participant in this study. Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address: <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey/>. Many thanks to those of you who have already completed the questionnaire.

Finally, 20 days after the initial email request for participation, practitioners received a final email request for participation. The text of this reminder notice was the same as the previous reminder. The next section describes the pretest used to check the instrument and the two modes of administration prior to conducting the survey.

Pretest

Prior to administering the survey, a pretest was conducted to determine the instrument's face validity and ease of use, as well as to gauge potential response rates for each mode of administration. In addition, the online pretest served as a method of

troubleshooting technical problems associated with this mode. No prenotification or reminder contacts were made for the pretest.

A sample of 50 public relations practitioners was drawn from the PRSA membership directory using random sampling with a systematic start. Of the 50 practitioners selected for inclusion in the pretest sample, 24% (n=12) did not provide an email address in their contact information. The questionnaire was administered to these individuals via direct mail. Practitioners received a packet containing a cover letter, questionnaire, and self-addressed stamped envelope.

Only two practitioners responded to the direct mail questionnaire, yielding a 16.7% response rate for this mode. Both respondents were male, with more than 25 years of experience in public relations. Responses to the questionnaire items indicated that the practitioners were able to understand it. Visual assessment of responses indicated variance between items and between strategies.

The direct mail pretest did result in one refusal (8%). The refusal is noteworthy because the respondent replied with a letter explaining why he was unable to complete the questionnaire. Portions of this letter are provided below.

After looking at your survey and pondering it, I must conclude that I simply do not know how to answer it. I had a grad school classmate who was into this and all us rough, news-trained types did not understand him. A generation later, when my son used one of his texts, I looked at it and still could not understand much of what he wrote. So I do not mean to pick at you, it is just beyond me.

My problem with your survey is in trying to find arbitrary rules (yours) in my experience. Your use of "the public" is hard for me to handle in that we always knew we had many publics and spent much of our effort trying to define and reach some who did not know that they should be interested in us. Inevitably, even for one peddling good health, some folks liked us and others did not.

If it helps any, I am male and have made a fair living at science writing, public relations, government relations, speeches, movies, videotapes, books and such for half a century. Some 35 years of that span were spent working for a national medical specialty society. . . . My undergraduate degree was in journalism from Missouri and my graduate degree in public relations with Scott Cutlip at Wisconsin.

This comment provides insight into the evolution of public relations practice. It is well known that early practitioners were considered “journalists-in-residence” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000). This individual illustrates the difficulty some practitioners face in merging journalistic and relational perspectives. In addition, his problem with the term ‘public’ supports recent literature advocating a need for more research on the concept.

For the purpose of this study, this refusal represents a potential problem in that some practitioners may not understand the terminology or just do not perceive their work to be as strategic as the survey instrument implies. It was hoped that this “old school” mindset would be diminished by practitioners who have recent public relations education.

The 38 practitioners who provided email contact information in the PRSA membership directory received a request for participation via email. The request contained a hyperlink to the Web site for the online survey. Unfortunately, technical problems with the survey Web site prevented access. Specifically, the site was secured and access privileges had not been set up, which caused an error message when respondents attempted to connect to the site. Rather than confound the response rate results, the Web address for the online survey was changed, access was enabled, and a new random sample of 38 practitioners with email addresses was drawn.

Five practitioners responded to the online pretest, yielding a response rate of 13.2%. One practitioner refused (2.6%) to complete the survey, stating that he did not feel it applied to the work he does. Portions of his message are provided below:

In reviewing the questionnaire, your emphasis on problem-solution terminology leads me to believe you'd receive more valid data from issues management specialists. My experience is in product publicity where issues like "awareness of the problem" don't even factor into our developing of a strategy or tactics. In fact, I believe if you get a significant response from publicity specialists, as opposed to public affairs specialists, your data will be skewed (more toward short-term behavior rather than long term attitudes).

This reply illustrates that practitioners who work in publicity may have difficulty completing the questionnaire if they do not approach their work from a strategic perspective. However, the reply suggests that practitioners do consider strategic outcomes and make distinctions between attitudinal and behavioral objectives. However, no conclusions regarding the reliability of responses could be drawn from a single reply.

The results of the pretest suggested that the instrument had face validity. Most practitioners surveyed through each mode of administration were able to understand the statements, and responses indicated variance among the items across strategies. In addition, technical problems with the online survey were identified and appropriate steps taken to ensure reliable data collection. However, pretest response statistics indicated low response rates were to be expected from the survey.

Response Statistics

Direct Mail Survey Response Statistics

The total sample size for the direct mail survey was 255. The prenotification letter served to eliminate invalid listings prior to sending the survey package. Specifically, 6 letters were undeliverable due to incorrect addresses. Eight more prenotification letters were returned because the practitioner no longer worked at the organization. This resulted in a valid sample of 241 practitioners. Of these, 54 completed and returned the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 22.4% and a completion rate of 21.2%. Six

practitioners refused to complete the survey, stating that they did not feel the topic of the survey applied to the work they did. This resulted in a refusal rate of 2.5%. No contact was made with the remaining 181 practitioners, producing a noncontact rate of 75.1%.

Online Survey Response Statistics

The total sample size for the online survey was 895. Again, the prenotification message served to eliminate incorrect email addresses prior to sending the request for participation. A total of 360 messages were undeliverable due to “fatal errors” in transmission, meaning the email account had been disabled or no longer existed. Another 26 practitioners were ineligible to participate in the study because they were retired (n=2), no longer members of PRSA (n=1), no longer worked in public relations (n=11), had left the organization (n=10), or did not have Internet access (n=2). This resulted in a valid sample of 509 practitioners. Of these, 128 practitioners completed the online questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 25.1% and a completion rate of 14.3%.

Refusals were received from 46 practitioners, producing a refusal rate of 9%. Most practitioners who declined to participate in the study stated that they had no time to complete the survey (n=17) or that the topic of the study did not apply to the work they do (n=14). Two practitioners said that the questionnaire was too difficult, and one said it was too long. Six practitioners gave no reason for refusing to complete the questionnaire. Finally, six practitioners who declined participation in the study cited the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centers on September 11. The attack occurred the day after the request for participation in this study was sent to practitioners and is assumed to have affected the ability and/or desire of other practitioners to participate in this research, although only six sent email replies stating this. The event itself, and the negative

comments made by practitioners when the two reminder notices were sent (post 9/11), contributed to the decision to halt online data collection after four contacts.

Calculating the noncontact rate for the online survey was problematic. Noncontacts for traditional modes of survey administration are calculated by subtracting only refusals and responses from the valid sample, because rarely are contacts other than these made. However, online surveys that use email to contact potential participants produce contacts other than refusals and responses.

Specifically, 86 “other” email messages were received from practitioners during the data collection period. Out-of-office automatic replies were received from 23 practitioners, and 63 practitioners sent other types of replies. Of these 63 replies, most were received after the first or second reminder email and stated that the practitioner had completed the questionnaire ($n=42$). However, 21 reply messages included comments and/or questions about the study, two of which pertained to problems accessing the survey Web site. These 21 reply messages were responded to by the researcher, which constitutes a fifth contact made with these practitioners in comparison to the four contacts made with most practitioners in the valid sample.

A second problem calculating the noncontact rate stems from the fact that no tracking device was used to gauge which practitioners had completed the online questionnaire. Thus, there was no way to conclude the degree of overlap in responses and “other” contacts. The noncontact rate for the online survey was calculated in the traditional way by combining the number of refusals ($n=46$) and responses ($n=128$) and subtracting this from the valid sample of 509. This resulted in 335 noncontacts and a noncontact rate of

65.8% for the online survey. It should be noted, however, that this is viewed as a conservative estimate due to the number of auto replies and other replies received.

The total sample of 1,150 PRSA members, surveyed via both modes of administration, produced only 182 completed questionnaires, which was significantly lower than the 377 responses required for meaningful data analysis. Thus, the decision was made to survey a second sample of practitioners using online administration methods.

Sample 2 Survey Response Statistics

A second sample of 1,703 practitioners was drawn from *The Blue Book* using random sampling methods with a systematic start. The sample size was increased due to the large number of undeliverable email addresses and the low response rate produced by the previous online sample. Practitioners who were included in the first sample were excluded from the second sample, as were practitioners who did not list an email address in the PRSA membership register or who were listed as educators or retirees.

The second sample was surveyed in February 2002, using the same procedures as the previous online survey. However, an additional reminder notice was sent to practitioners, resulting in five contacts with this sample.

Of the 1,703 prenotification email messages sent to the second sample, 755 messages were undeliverable. Another 45 practitioners were ineligible to participate in the study because they were retired (n=4), no longer members of PRSA (n=3), no longer worked in public relations (n=23), or had left the organization (n=15). This resulted in a valid sample of 903 practitioners. Of these, 221 practitioners completed the online questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 24.5% and a completion rate of 13%.

Refusals were received from 64 practitioners, producing a refusal rate of 7.1%. Most practitioners who declined to participate in the study stated that they had no time to

complete the survey (n=23) or that the topic of the study did not apply to the work they do (n=18). Four practitioners said that the questionnaire was too difficult, and four said it was too long. Two practitioners said it was against company policy to participate in research, one said she didn't have enough experience to complete the questionnaire, and 12 practitioners gave no reason for refusing to participate.

In addition, 186 "other" email messages were received from practitioners during the data collection period for the second sample. Out-of-office automatic replies were received from 58 practitioners, and 128 practitioners sent other types of replies. Of these 128 replies, most were received after the first, second, or third reminder message indicating that the practitioner had completed the questionnaire (n=92). However, 36 reply messages included comments and/or questions about the study. Many of these messages were responded to by the researcher.

The noncontact rate for the second online survey was calculated by combining the number of refusals (n=64) and responses (n=221) and subtracting this from the valid sample of 903. This resulted in 618 noncontacts, and a noncontact rate of 68.4%. The response statistics for the direct mail and online surveys for the first sample and the online survey for the second sample are presented in Table 5.

It should be noted that the total number of survey respondents across samples and modes of administration (n=403) constitutes 2% of the total sample frame of 19,593 PRSA members (reported by PRSA representative via personal correspondence in June 2001). The following section describes the techniques used to analyze the data collected in this study.

Table 5: Survey response statistics

	Sample 1 Direct Mail	Sample 1 Online	Sample 2 Online	Total
Total sample	255	895	1,703	2,853
Undeliverable	6	360	755	1,121
Ineligible	8	26	45	79
Valid sample	241	509	903	1,653
Refusals	6	46	64	116
Responses	54	128	221	403
Auto replies	n/a	26	58	84
Other replies	n/a	63	128	191
Noncontacts	181	335	618	1,134
Response rate	22.4%	25.1%	24.5%	24.4%
Refusal rate	2.5%	9.0%	7.1%	7.0%
Completion rate	21.2%	14.3%	13.0%	14.1%
Noncontact rate	75.1%	65.8%	68.4%	68.6%

Data Analysis

All data analysis in this study was conducted using SPSS 10.1 for Windows. A $p \leq .05$ significance level was used as the criterion to reject the null hypothesis for all statistical tests performed. Due to the nature of the survey instrument, partially completed questionnaires were used in the data analysis, so the number of respondents varied for each statistical test.

Data analysis was conducted in several steps. First, the data were analyzed to determine if mode of administration or time of administration had an impact on survey responses. Specifically, the first sample was analyzed using independent-samples t tests to determine if significant difference existed between direct mail and online responses. These tests were used because they calculate a t statistic that does not assume equal variance. Because the sample sizes for the direct mail and online modes of administration

were unequal, this was considered the most appropriate method for examining differences between the two groups. The grouping variable for these tests was mode of administration, and all items on the questionnaire, except categorical demographic measures, were entered as test variables. An eta-squared effect size index was computed manually for any test variable that produced a significant t value. According to Green, Salkind, and Akey (2000), eta-squared values of .01, .06, and .14 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively.

Similarly, independent-samples t tests were used to examine differences in responses between the first sample and the second sample, which were surveyed approximately five months apart. The grouping variable for these tests was sample number (1 or 2), and all items on the questionnaire, excluding categorical demographic measures, were entered as test variables. Again, an eta-squared effect size index was computed manually for any test variable that indicated a significant difference between samples.

Following these analyses, demographic variables were examined. Categorical variables were compared across modes of administration and samples, and overall demographic characteristics of the combined samples were examined. The overall sample was compared to population demographics provided by PRSA, as well as previous research using similar items (Page & Hazleton, 1999). In addition, one-way ANOVA tests were conducted to determine if strategy use was influenced by any of the demographic variables. Gender, accreditation status, role, education, and organization type were of particular interest.

Finally, a series of statistical tests were performed to test the hypotheses and propositions of interest, and to examine the research questions concerning goal

compatibility. Prior to this, Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the indices measuring goal compatibility and strategy effectiveness. In addition, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was calculated on the items used to measure problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, information seeking, and information processing to determine how they related.

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was performed to determine variance in frequency of strategy use. This was followed by paired *t* tests to determine specific differences in frequency of use among the four strategies. A doubly multivariate repeated measures ANOVA was used to assess the influence of attributes of publics on strategy use. This was followed by post hoc pairwise comparisons to determine specific differences in attributes of publics across strategies.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine attributes of publics as predictors of strategy effectiveness. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the relationship of goal compatibility to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement. Finally, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the influence of goal compatibility on the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics. These analysis techniques are described in detail below.

Frequency of Strategy Use

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was performed to determine variance in frequency of use across strategies. The within-subjects factor was strategy type with four levels and the dependent variable was frequency of use. According to Green et al. (2000), the standard univariate ANOVA *F* test is not recommended when the within-subjects factor has more than two levels because the sphericity assumption is commonly violated, which results in inaccurate *p*-values. Therefore, multivariate tests of within-subjects

effects were used to test the hypotheses in this study because they do not require the assumption of sphericity to be met. The multivariate test computes difference scores by comparing scores from different levels of the within-subjects factor. In addition, “applied statisticians tend to prefer the multivariate test to the standard or the alternative univariate test because the multivariate test and follow-up tests have a close conceptual link to each other” (Green et al., 2000, p. 210).

Paired *t* tests were used for follow-up pairwise comparisons to determine specific differences in frequency of use across the four strategies. Paired *t* tests were considered more appropriate than polynomial contrasts as follow-up tests because contrasts “should be conducted only if the levels of the within-subjects factor represent values along a quantitative dimension” (Green et al., 2000, p. 212). Strategy type is a qualitative variable, so polynomial contrasts were not appropriate.

In addition, the Bonferroni procedure was used for follow-up pairwise comparisons between group means. According to Green et al. (2000), the Bonferroni procedure controls overall error rate by setting the error rate for each test to the experimentwise error rate divided by the total number of tests. Therefore, the observed significance level is adjusted for the fact that multiple comparisons are being made.

These statistical procedures were used to test the following hypothesis:

- H1: In the implementation of public relations campaigns, informative and persuasive strategies are used more frequently than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies.

Attributes of Publics

Prior to testing H2 and its related propositions, Cronbach’s alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the multiple-item goal compatibility measure. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2001), a commonly held standard for reliability alphas is .75 or

higher. Carmines and Zeller (1979) stated that reliability alphas should not fall below .80 for widely used scales. Similarly, Berman (2002) stated that alpha values between .80 and 1.00 indicate high reliability. Because this study used a repeated measures design, analysis of the items measuring goal compatibility was conducted for each strategy separately. The index alpha scores for each strategy were then averaged to compute an overall reliability score for the goal compatibility index.

Assessment of goal compatibility indices was followed by an examination of the items used to measure the attributes of publics derived from the situational theory of publics. Specifically, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was calculated on the sets of items measuring problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, information seeking, and information processing. For the behavioral sciences, correlation coefficients of .10, .30, and .50, irrespective of sign, are typically interpreted as small, medium, and large coefficients, respectively (Green et al., 2000). Berman (2002) stated that values of r^2 above .40 are considered strong, and those above .65 are considered very strong. Correlation analysis provided a deeper understanding of the relationship between the internal and external measures of the independent variables in the situational theory, as well as the relationship between the items measuring information seeking and information processing behavior. It also was used to determine the appropriateness of combining measures for hypothesis testing.

Following correlation analysis, a doubly multivariate repeated measures ANOVA was performed to determine the influence of attributes of publics on strategy use. Strategy type was the within-subjects factor with four levels, and attributes of publics served as dependent variables entered as measures. Multivariate tests of within-subjects effects

were used to determine the overall significance of attributes of publics to strategy use. Alternative univariate tests were conducted to determine the effect of individual attributes of publics on strategy use. Greenhouse-Geisser Epsilon was used to adjust for violation of the sphericity assumption. Paired *t* tests were used to examine specific differences in attributes of publics across strategies. The Bonferroni procedure was used to control for Type I error across the multiple pairwise tests. Again, paired *t* tests were more appropriate than post hoc contrasts because the research design used a qualitative within-subjects factor.

These procedures were used to test the following hypothesis and related propositions.

H2: Perceived attributes of publics influence public relations strategy use in organizations.

P2.1: When informative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition and low goal compatibility.

P2.2: When facilitative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having moderate problem recognition, high goal compatibility, high involvement, and information processing behavior.

P2.3: When persuasive strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition, low goal compatibility, low involvement, and information seeking behavior.

P2.4: When cooperative problem-solving strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having high problem recognition, high goal compatibility, and information seeking behavior.

Public Relations Strategy Effectiveness

Before testing H3 and its related propositions, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the multiple-item effectiveness index. Because this study used a repeated measures design, analysis of the items measuring strategy effectiveness was conducted for each strategy separately. The index alpha scores for each strategy were then averaged to compute an overall reliability score for the strategy effectiveness index.

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine if attributes of publics are predictors of public relations strategy effectiveness. Regression analysis predicts the probable values of the dependent variable based on the known values of the independent variables (Smith, 1988). Prior to full model specification, error term plots for each variable were examined to check assumptions of linearity and homogeneity-of-variance and to detect and remove outliers. According to Berman (2002), observations typically are defined as outliers when their residuals exceed three standard deviations. The affect of outliers was determined by removal and reestimation of the model. Outliers found to substantively affect conclusions were excluded from analysis.

For each of the four strategies, forward stepwise regression analysis was used to determine the attributes of publics most relevant to prediction of strategy effectiveness. This method was chosen because it controls for multicollinearity among the independent variables. Multicollinearity is caused when independent variables in a regression analysis are correlated, causing their effects on the dependent variable to be indistinguishably similar (Berman, 2002). Multicollinearity is more likely to occur as more variables are entered into a regression model.

An indicator of multicollinearity in regression analysis is tolerance, a statistic that represents the proportion of a variable's variance not accounted for by other independent variables in the equation. A variable with very low tolerance contributes little information to a model, and can cause computational problems. In forward stepwise regression, all variables must pass the tolerance criterion to be entered in the equation. In addition, a variable is not entered if it would cause the tolerance of another variable already in the

model to drop below the tolerance criterion. For the analysis used in this study, the tolerance level was 0.0001.

In the regression analysis for each strategy, attributes of publics were entered as random-effects unordered predictor variables. Strategy effectiveness was the criterion variable. The criterion to enter a predictor in the regression equation was the probability $F \leq .05$. Effect size was assessed using adjusted R^2 to control for the large number of independent variables in the model. According to Berman (2002), R^2 and adjusted R^2 values below .20 are considered weak, those between .20 and .40 are moderate, and those above .40 are considered strong. Values above .65 are considered very strong.

Standardized regression coefficients (Betas) were assessed to determine the contribution of individual attributes of publics to prediction of strategy effectiveness. These statistical procedures were used to test the following hypothesis and propositions.

- H3: Perceived attributes of publics are predictors of public relations strategy effectiveness.
- P3.1: Informative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition.
- P3.2: Facilitative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and information processing behavior.
- P3.3: Persuasive strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility.
- P3.4: Cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition.

Goal Compatibility Research Questions

For each strategy, bivariate correlation analysis using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was conducted to determine the relationship of goal compatibility to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement.

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the influence of goal compatibility on the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics. Specifically, the situational theory of publics was tested with the addition of the goal compatibility measure. Two forward stepwise regression analyses were conducted for each strategy. In the first analysis, items measuring problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, and goal compatibility were entered into the regression equation as random-effects unordered predictor variables. The two items measuring information seeking behavior were combined into a single information seeking measure, which served as the criterion variable. In the second analysis, the same predictor variables were entered into the equation, but the information processing item, "The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it out," was the criterion variable. These tests were used to examine the following research questions:

RQ1: Is goal compatibility related to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement in publics?

RQ2: Does goal compatibility influence the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics?

This chapter summarized the methods used to examine the hypotheses, propositions, and research questions posited by this study. It explained the research design, instrumentation, sampling, data collection, pretest, response rate, and data analysis. The results of the data analysis described in this chapter are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis outlined in Chapter 3. The chapter begins by examining the data to determine if survey responses were influenced by mode of administration or time of administration. This is followed by analysis of the demographic data to determine the overall characteristics of the sample. Next, the hypotheses and propositions posited by this study are tested, and the research questions concerning goal compatibility and its relationship to the variables in the situational theory of publics are investigated.

Analysis of Differences in Mode of Administration

Analysis of the data collected in this study began with examining differences in mode of administration. Specifically, independent samples t tests were conducted to determine if significant differences existed in responses for the direct mail and online modes of administration used in the first sample. The grouping variable for these tests was mode of administration. All items on the questionnaire, except categorical demographic measures, were entered as test variables. Of the 94 items tested, four items produced a significant t -value. The means and standard deviations for these items are provided in Table 6.

Specifically, responses to one item measuring external involvement were significantly different across modes for the informative strategy, $t(115.48) = 2.47, p = .015, \eta^2 = 0.047$. Responses to the measure of internal constraint recognition were significantly different across modes for the facilitative strategy, $t(82.83) = 2.38, p = .02, \eta^2 = 0.051$.

Table 6: Significantly different items across modes

Item	Mode	N	Mean	SD
Informative Strategy: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	Direct Mail	49	5.82	1.269
	Online	77	5.19	1.531
Facilitative Strategy: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	Direct Mail	44	4.02	1.649
	Online	64	3.30	1.411
Years in current position	Direct Mail	52	8.58	6.391
	Online	121	5.24	5.360
Total years of experience in public relations	Direct Mail	51	19.13	10.209
	Online	122	14.99	9.099

In addition, the demographic variables measuring years of experience in current position, $t(171) = 3.535$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.068$, and years of experience in public relations, $t(84.85) = 2.51$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2 = 0.036$, were significantly different across direct mail and online modes of administration.

An examination of the mean scores for these four items indicates that the direct mail mode produced, on average, higher scores on these variables than the online mode. Of particular interest are the two demographic variables. The means indicate that practitioners in the direct mail sample had approximately three years more experience in their current position, and over four years more experience in public relations. This suggests that practitioners who responded to the direct mail questionnaire may be, on average, older than practitioners who responded to the online questionnaire.

However, the number of variables that produced significant t -values was minimal, and the effect size for each of the items was not large; therefore, data analysis proceeded with examination of differences in the two samples.

Analysis of Differences in Samples

Independent samples *t* tests were conducted to examine differences in responses between the first and second samples. The grouping variable for these tests was sample (1 or 2). All items on the questionnaire, except categorical demographic measures, were entered as test variables. Of the 94 items tested, eight items produced significant *t*-values. The means, standard deviations, and *t* test results for these items are provided in Table 7.

Table 7: Significantly different items across samples

Item	Sample	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	η^2
Informative Strategy: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	Sample 1	125	3.99	1.609	2.887	252.24	.004	0.030
	Sample 2	148	3.45	1.449				
Persuasive Strategy: The strategy was successful in achieving the goals of the public.	Sample 1	133	5.28	1.164	2.011	297.00	.045	0.013
	Sample 2	166	4.97	1.429				
Persuasive Strategy: My organization got what it wanted when this strategy was used.	Sample 1	132	5.78	1.213	2.012	291.43	.045	0.013
	Sample 2	169	5.49	1.323				
Persuasive Strategy: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not seek it out.	Sample 1	134	4.81	1.585	2.121	289.02	.035	0.015
	Sample 2	171	4.42	1.626				
Cooperative Problem Solving Strategy: The public could not solve the problem.	Sample 1	113	5.18	1.513	3.061	246.35	.002	0.035
	Sample 2	147	4.59	1.587				
Cooperative Problem Solving Strategy: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	Sample 1	113	4.89	1.549	2.363	241.40	.019	0.021
	Sample 2	147	4.44	1.553				
Cooperative Problem Solving Strategy: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	Sample 1	113	3.95	1.657	2.894	223.50	.004	0.031
	Sample 2	148	3.38	1.454				
Cooperative Problem Solving Strategy: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not seek it out.	Sample 1	113	4.42	1.761	2.805	231.15	.005	0.029
	Sample 2	149	3.82	1.632				

The item measuring internal constraint recognition when the informative strategy was used was significantly different between samples. Two items measuring effectiveness and one item measuring information processing behavior when the persuasive strategy was used were significantly different between samples. Finally, all three items measuring constraint recognition and one item measuring information processing behavior produced significantly different responses between the two samples when the cooperative problem solving strategy was used.

An examination of the means indicates that the scores for the first sample are higher than scores for the second sample on these items. These results indicate that respondents in the first sample may have chosen examples in which persuasive strategies were perceived as being more effective. In addition, practitioners in the first sample may have chosen cooperative problem solving strategies in which the public was perceived as having higher constraint recognition.

Due to the limited number of variables that resulted in significant *t*-values, as well as the small effect sizes produced, the decision was made to proceed with analysis of demographic variables.

Analysis of Demographics

The instrument used in this study measured eight demographic variables. Of these, six were categorical variables that examined gender, accreditation status, primary public relations role, salary range, education level, and organization type. In addition, two continuous variables examined years in current position and years of public relations experience.

The results of the categorical variables of gender, accreditation status, primary public relations role, salary range, education level, and organization type are shown in Table 8.

The categories used for these variables were derived from the PRSA membership application and reflect demographic data collected for the population of interest in this study. All percentages reflect the valid sample.

Table 8: Categorical demographic variables across modes, samples, and study

Variable	Sample 1 Direct Mail		Sample 1 Online		Sample 2 Online		Study Total	
Gender	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	29	53.7	78	61.9	119	55.3	226	57.2
Male	25	46.3	48	38.1	96	44.7	169	42.8
Accreditation Status	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	22	41.5	50	40.3	74	33.9	146	37.0
No	31	58.5	74	59.7	144	66.1	249	63.0
Primary Role	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Entry Level/Technician	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	0.5	2	0.5
Specialist/Assistant/Junior	6	11.1	13	10.2	31	14.2	50	12.5
Supervisory/Director/Manager	22	40.7	66	52.0	106	48.6	194	48.6
Senior Manager	18	33.3	38	29.9	70	32.1	126	31.6
Other	8	14.8	9	7.1	10	4.6	27	6.8
Salary Range (\$)	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
15,000-25,000	1	1.9	2	1.7	2	0.9	5	1.3
25,001-39,000	4	7.4	20	16.5	23	10.7	47	12.1
39,001-55,000	13	24.1	33	27.3	57	26.5	103	26.4
55,001-76,000	9	16.7	28	23.1	49	22.8	86	22.1
76,001 and above	27	50.0	36	29.8	74	34.4	137	35.1
Other	0	0.0	2	1.7	10	4.7	12	3.1
Education Level	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
High School Diploma	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Incomplete Undergraduate	1	1.9	1	0.8	4	1.8	6	1.5
Undergraduate Degree	33	61.1	77	60.6	126	57.8	236	59.1
Other Graduate Degree	17	31.5	43	33.9	76	34.9	136	34.1
MBA	3	5.6	6	4.7	12	5.5	21	5.3
Organization Type	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
PR Firm/Advertising Agency	11	20.4	33	26.0	52	23.6	96	23.9
Corporation	19	35.2	37	29.1	50	22.7	106	26.4
Government	6	11.1	5	3.9	34	15.5	45	11.2
Association	3	5.6	3	2.4	11	5.0	17	4.2
Educational Institution	1	1.9	13	10.2	27	12.3	41	10.2
Not-for-profit	7	13.0	27	21.3	21	9.5	55	13.7
Health and Welfare	5	9.3	3	2.4	12	5.5	20	5.0
Other	2	3.7	6	4.7	13	5.9	21	5.2

An examination of the demographic data across modes of administration and samples indicates general consistency in the characteristics of respondents. The majority of respondents were female (57.2%), although a larger percentage of women were represented in the online group than in the direct mail group in the first sample. According to population demographics provided by a PRSA representative in June 2001, 65% of PRSA members are female and 35% are male. While not identical, the gender characteristics of the sample in this study are similar to those of the population. In fact, PRSA does not publicize membership demographics; therefore, the percentages provided may not be accurate. The gender characteristics reported in this study are closer to those reported by Page and Hazleton (1999), who found that 54.7% of practitioners were female and 45.7% were male.

The majority of practitioners who responded to this survey were not accredited in public relations (63%). According to PRSA, 20.6% of its membership is accredited, which is substantially lower than the number of practitioners who reported they were APR in this study (37%). It is possible that many practitioners became accredited between June 2001 and the time this study was conducted; however, social desirability bias is more likely the cause of the discrepancy. In addition, practitioners who are APR may have an increased tendency to participate in research. Page and Hazleton (1999) reported that 43.8% of respondents in their study were accredited.

Most practitioners reported they were managers (48.6%) or senior managers (31.6%); however, the fact that only two practitioners of the 399 who responded to this item said they were entry-level practitioners or technicians is highly suspicious. These results most likely reflect social desirability bias. It is possible, however, that entry-level practitioners

and technicians did not respond to the survey because they did not understand it or felt the topic did not apply to the work they do. Several refusals indicated this bias; however, there is no way to know to what extent it was present. No population parameters were available for this variable, and Page and Hazleton did not measure roles in their study.

The majority of respondents reported salaries greater than \$55,000 per year (57.2%), and the largest percentage of practitioners reported making more than \$76,000 per year (35.1%). This is interesting since most practitioners reported that an undergraduate degree was the highest level of education they had completed (59.1%). Again, social desirability bias may be present in responses as the tendency to over-report salary in surveys is common. It is encouraging, though, that most individuals who responded to the present survey have college degrees, and many have graduate degrees (34.1%). No information was available for salary range or education level of PRSA members; however, Page and Hazleton reported that 37.1% of PRSA members surveyed had undergraduate degrees and 36.2% had graduate degrees.

The type of organization practitioners work for also was examined. The largest number of respondents reported that they work for corporations (26.4%); however, a large percentage work for public relations firms and advertising agencies (23.9%). Interestingly, this trend is reversed in the second sample, with slightly more respondents reporting that they work for firms (23.6%) than for corporations (22.7%). In addition, more respondents reported working for not-for-profit organizations in the first sample online group (21.3%) than in other groups. Frequencies for organization type from this study were compared to information provided by PRSA and with sample characteristics reported by Page and Hazleton (1999). These comparisons are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Comparison of sample demographics to previous research and population

Organization Type	Current Study	Page & Hazleton	PRSA
PR Firm/Ad Agency	23.9	25.7	29.0
Corporations	26.4	29.5	30.0
Government	11.2	8.6	6.0
Association	4.2	4.8	6.0
Education	10.2	6.7	6.0
Not-for-profit	13.7	13.3	1.0
Health and Welfare	5.0	6.7	6.0
Other	5.2	4.8	16.0

The frequencies for organization type in the present study more closely reflect the results of Page and Hazleton's study than population demographics reported by PRSA. In addition, the whole numbers reported by PRSA suggest a lack of precision in calculating the frequencies for this variable. It is also important to note that the PRSA "other" category includes retirees, who were not included in this study.

The demographic characteristics of the sample in this study, while not identical to those reported by PRSA, appear to be similar enough to provide support for generalizing the results of this study to the parent population. Thus, data analysis proceeded with examination of the relationship between demographic characteristics and strategy use.

A series of one-way ANOVA tests were conducted to determine if demographic characteristics were related to public relations strategy use. Specifically, the frequency of use measure for each of the four strategies was entered as the dependent variable and each categorical demographic variable was entered as the independent variable. Two variables, gender and organization type, produced a significant effect on use of one or more strategies. Results of the ANOVA indicated that gender has a significant effect on use of the facilitative strategy, $F(2,296)=4.328, p=.038$, partial $\eta^2=.014$. Specifically,

females ($n=164$, $\mu=4.46$) reported using the facilitative strategy significantly more than their male ($n=134$, $\mu=3.94$) counterparts. However, the effect size was small.

The results of the ANOVA indicated that organization type has a significant effect on use of the informative and facilitative strategies. Specifically, 5.6% of the variance in use of the informative strategy is explained by organization type, $F(7,287)=2.420$, $p=.02$, partial $\eta^2=.056$. A Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was significant ($p=.01$); so multiple comparisons were made using the LSD procedure. Results indicated that government agencies ($\mu=5.51$) use informative strategies significantly more than corporations ($\mu=4.54$), $p=.008$. In addition, non-profit organizations ($\mu=5.63$) use informative strategies significantly more than corporations ($\mu=4.54$), $p=.002$, and educational institutions ($\mu=4.70$), $p=.042$.

Similarly, the results of the ANOVA indicated that 5.6% of the variance in use of the facilitative strategy is explained by organization type, $F(7,295)=2.479$, $p=.017$, partial $\eta^2=.056$. A Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was significant ($p=.003$); so multiple comparisons were made using the LSD procedure. Results indicated that organizations devoted to health and welfare ($\mu=6.07$) use facilitative strategies significantly more than public relations firms ($\mu=4.34$, $p=.005$), corporations ($\mu=3.94$, $p=.001$), government agencies ($\mu=4.08$, $p=.003$), associations ($\mu=4.17$, $p=.022$), educational institutions ($\mu=3.69$, $p=.001$), and non-profit organizations ($\mu=4.64$, $p=.029$).

Following analysis of the influence of demographic variable on strategy use, testing of the hypotheses and propositions posited by this study was conducted. The following section summarizes the results for frequency of strategy use.

Frequency of Strategy Use

A repeated measures ANOVA was performed to test H1, which posited that informative and persuasive strategies are used more frequently than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies. The within-subjects factor was strategy type with four levels and the dependent variable was frequency of use. Multivariate tests of within-subjects effects revealed statistically significant differences in frequency of use across the four strategies, Wilks' $\Lambda=.834$, $F(3, 265)=17.64$, $p=.000$, multivariate $\eta^2=.166$. The eta-squared score indicates that strategy type accounts for approximately 16.6% of the variance in frequency of use measures. The mean and standard deviation scores for frequency of strategy use are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Mean and standard deviation for frequency of strategy use

Strategy Type	N	Mean	SD
Informative	268	4.98	1.810
Facilitative	268	4.26	2.129
Persuasive	268	5.02	2.012
Cooperative problem solving	268	4.16	2.160

The results indicate that the persuasive strategy is the most frequently used strategy, followed by the informative, facilitative, and cooperative problem solving strategies. Paired t tests using the Bonferroni procedure were conducted for follow-up pairwise comparisons to determine specific differences in frequency of use across the four strategies. The results of these tests are shown in Table 11.

The results of the pairwise comparisons indicate the following:

1. Informative strategies are used significantly more often than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies.
2. Facilitative strategies are used significantly less often than informative and persuasive strategies.

3. Persuasive strategies are used significantly more often than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies.
4. Cooperative problem solving strategies are used significantly less often than informative and persuasive strategies.

Table 11: Pairwise comparisons for frequency of use across strategies

Strategy (I)	Strategy (J)	Mean difference (I-J)*	p-value
Informative	Facilitative	.720	.000
	Persuasive	-.037	1.000
	Cooperative problem solving	.821	.000
Facilitative	Informative	-.720	.000
	Persuasive	-.757	.000
	Cooperative problem solving	.101	1.000
Persuasive	Informative	.037	1.000
	Facilitative	.757	.000
	Cooperative problem solving	.858	.000
Cooperative problem solving	Informative	-.821	.000
	Facilitative	-.101	1.000
	Persuasive	-.858	.000

* Based on estimated marginal means. Bonferroni adjustment for multiple pairwise comparisons.

Attributes of Publics

Prior to testing hypotheses related to attributes of publics, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the multiple-item goal compatibility index. Since goal compatibility was measured separately for the four public relations strategies, item analysis was conducted separately for each strategy. The alpha scores for the four three-item indices were then averaged to compute an overall reliability score for the goal compatibility index. The results of the reliability analysis are provided in Table 12.

The average alpha coefficient of .82 indicated that the items measuring goal compatibility were reliable; therefore, the three goal compatibility items for each of the

four strategies were summed to create a single goal compatibility measure for each strategy. These measures were used in all subsequent data analysis.

Table 12: Reliability scores for goal compatibility index

Strategy	Alpha coefficient
Informative	.7579
Facilitative	.8089
Persuasive	.8615
Cooperative problem solving	.8552
Average Reliability	.8208

Next, an assessment of the items measuring perceived attributes of publics derived from the situational theory of publics was conducted. For each strategy, correlation analysis using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was conducted for the measures of each attribute. Results of correlation analysis for the independent variables of problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement are presented in Tables 13-15. All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level.

This analysis indicated that the two measures of external problem recognition produced a strong positive correlation across all four of the public relations strategies. The external and internal measures positively correlated; however, the correlation was not strong. The items measuring external and internal constraint recognition also produced significant positive correlations across all four strategies, but they were moderate. Similarly, the two measures of external involvement were positively correlated, but the correlation was not strong. The internal measure of involvement produced a strong correlation with one external measure and a moderate correlation with the other external measure.

Table 13: Correlations for problem recognition measures

Strategy Type	Item	External PR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	External PR2: The public thought the situation was serious.	Internal PR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.
Informative	External PR1	1	.564	.188
	External PR2	.564	1	.223
Facilitative	External PR1	1	.608	.334
	External PR2	.608	1	.349
Persuasive	External PR1	1	.502	.189
	External PR2	.502	1	.281
Cooperative problem solving	External PR1	1	.535	.365
	External PR2	.535	1	.335

Table 14: Correlations for constraint recognition measures

Strategy Type	Item	External CR1: The public could not solve the problem.	External CR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	Internal CR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.
Informative	External CR1	1	.272	.201
	External CR 2	.272	1	.326
Facilitative	External CR 1	1	.321	.249
	External CR 2	.321	1	.238
Persuasive	External CR 1	1	.330	.347
	External CR 2	.330	1	.314
Cooperative problem solving	External CR 1	1	.406	.305
	External CR 2	.406	1	.349

Table 15: Correlations for involvement measures

Strategy Type	Item	External IN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	External IN2: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	Internal IN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.
Informative	External IN1	1	.323	.530
	External IN2	.323	1	.187
Facilitative	External IN1	1	.381	.596
	External IN2	.381	1	.331
Persuasive	External IN1	1	.337	.492
	External IN2	.337	1	.272
Cooperative problem solving	External IN1	1	.366	.543
	External IN2	.366	1	.331

Correlation analysis also was conducted for the items measuring perceived information seeking and information processing behavior, the dependent variables in the situational theory of publics. The results of this analysis are provided in Table 16.

Table 16: Correlations for information seeking and information processing measures

Strategy Type	Item	Seeking 1: The public was actively seeking information about the situation.	Seeking 2: Members of the public sought information from my organization about the problem.	Processing 1: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it.	Processing 2: The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.
Informative	Seek 1	1	.581**	-.420**	.222**
	Seek 2	.581**	1	-.377**	.266**
	Process 1	-.420**	-.377**	1	-.109
	Process 2	.222**	.266**	-.109	1
Facilitative	Seek 1	1	.666**	-.424**	.278**
	Seek 2	.666**	1	-.420**	.366**
	Process 1	-.424**	-.420**	1	-.010
	Process 2	.278**	.366**	-.010	1
Persuasive	Seek 1	1	.639**	-.499**	.057
	Seek 2	.639**	1	-.477**	.141*
	Process 1	-.499**	-.477**	1	-.061
	Process 2	.057	.141*	-.061	1
Cooperative problem solving	Seek 1	1	.640**	-.351**	.329**
	Seek 2	.640**	1	-.344**	.385**
	Process 1	-.351**	-.344**	1	-.101
	Process 2	.329**	.385**	-.101	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

A strong positive correlation was indicated for the two items measuring perceived information seeking behavior across all four strategies. The two items measuring information processing behavior were negatively correlated across all strategies, but the correlations were not significant. In addition, one measure of information processing (Processing 1) produced moderate to strong negative correlations with the two information seeking measures. The other information processing measure (Processing 2) produced weak to moderate positive correlations with the information seeking items. Due

to the mixed results of the correlation analysis, the items used to measure the independent and dependent variables in the situational theory were examined individually in subsequent ANOVA tests.

Following analysis of the items used to measure perceived attributes of publics, a doubly multivariate repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test H2, which posited that perceived attributes of publics influence strategy use. Strategy type was the within-subjects factor with four levels, and attributes of publics served as dependent variables entered as measures. A multivariate test of within-subjects effects indicated a significant strategy type effect, Wilks' $\Lambda = .420$, $F(42,98) = 3.219$, $p = .000$, multivariate $\eta^2 = .580$. Specifically, strategy type accounted for 58% of the variance in attributes of publics across strategies. The mean and standard deviation scores for attributes of publics across strategies are provided in Table 17. All mean scores are based on 140 responses.

Alternative univariate tests were conducted to determine the affect of individual attributes of publics on strategy use. Greenhouse-Geisser Epsilon was used to adjust for violation of the sphericity assumption. Table 18 shows the results of the univariate tests.

Eleven of the 14 items produced a significant F -value. The measures of internal problem recognition (InPR), internal involvement (InIN), and information processing behavior (Information Processing 2) did not produce a significant F -value. One measure of external problem recognition (ExPR1) produced the largest effect size, followed by the measure of internal constraint recognition (InCR) and the other measure of external problem recognition (ExPR2). The measure of goal compatibility, the two measures of external involvement, and one measure of external constraint recognition (ExCR2) produced the smallest effect sizes.

Table 17: Mean and standard deviation for attributes of publics across strategies

Attributes of Publics	Strategy Type	Mean	SD
Goal Compatibility (3 items combined)	Informative	14.25	3.935
	Facilitative	14.74	3.927
	Persuasive	13.39	4.326
	Cooperative problem solving	13.84	4.634
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	Informative	5.24	1.515
	Facilitative	4.43	1.597
	Persuasive	4.75	1.560
	Cooperative problem solving	5.50	1.267
ExPR2: The public thought the situation was serious.	Informative	5.09	1.603
	Facilitative	4.49	1.571
	Persuasive	4.95	1.426
	Cooperative problem solving	5.44	1.310
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	Informative	5.41	1.162
	Facilitative	5.31	1.320
	Persuasive	5.28	1.194
	Cooperative problem solving	5.52	1.238
ExCR1: The public could not solve the problem.	Informative	4.77	1.672
	Facilitative	4.34	1.661
	Persuasive	4.33	1.660
	Cooperative problem solving	4.83	1.582
ExCR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	Informative	4.40	1.700
	Facilitative	4.20	1.504
	Persuasive	4.69	1.560
	Cooperative problem solving	4.63	1.637
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	Informative	3.68	1.579
	Facilitative	3.45	1.490
	Persuasive	3.69	1.574
	Cooperative problem solving	3.59	1.596
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	Informative	4.81	1.493
	Facilitative	4.65	1.613
	Persuasive	4.89	1.443
	Cooperative problem solving	5.44	1.385
ExIN2: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	Informative	5.63	1.127
	Facilitative	5.54	1.327
	Persuasive	5.54	1.283
	Cooperative problem solving	5.96	0.847
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	Informative	4.90	1.624
	Facilitative	4.69	1.667
	Persuasive	5.15	1.388
	Cooperative problem solving	5.64	1.247
Information Seeking 1: The public was actively seeking information about the situation.	Informative	4.77	1.602
	Facilitative	4.44	1.624
	Persuasive	4.23	1.624
	Cooperative problem solving	5.06	1.608

Table 17—continued

Attributes of Publics	Strategy Type	Mean	SD
Information Seeking 2: Members of the public sought information from my organization about the problem.	Informative	5.22	1.445
	Facilitative	4.59	1.627
	Persuasive	4.69	1.591
	Cooperative problem solving	5.39	1.428
Information Processing 1: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it out.	Informative	4.47	1.510
	Facilitative	4.56	1.597
	Persuasive	4.71	1.629
	Cooperative problem solving	3.94	1.747
Information Processing 2: The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.	Informative	5.59	1.045
	Facilitative	5.59	0.982
	Persuasive	5.72	0.975
	Cooperative problem solving	5.71	0.962

Table 18: Univariate effect of attributes of publics on strategy use

Attributes of Publics	<i>F</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Goal Compatibility (3 items combined)	3.640	2.813	.015	.026
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	17.832	2.887	.000	.114
ExPR2: The public thought the situation was serious.	13.284	2.923	.000	.087
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	1.608	2.952	.188	.011
ExCR1: The public could not solve the problem.	11.150	2.937	.000	.074
ExCR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	5.287	2.801	.002	.037
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	14.061	2.945	.000	.092
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	5.272	2.921	.002	.037
ExIN2: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	3.493	1.943	.016	.025
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	1.097	2.984	.350	.008
Information Seeking 1: The public was actively seeking information about the situation.	9.398	2.934	.000	.063
Information Seeking 2: Members of the public sought information from my organization about the problem.	11.564	2.888	.000	.077
Information Processing 1: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it out.	7.751	2.859	.000	.053
Information Processing 2: The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.	1.135	2.864	.333	.008

To test P2.1-2.4, multiple pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine differences in attributes of publics across strategies. Paired *t* tests were conducted using the Bonferroni procedure to control for Type I error. Results are shown in Table 19. Only items that produced significance are shown. Significant *p*-values are indicated in bold.

The results indicate that when informative strategies are used, the public is perceived as:

1. More likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
2. More likely to think the problem is serious than when facilitative strategies are used.
3. Less likely to be involved in the situation, personally affected by the situation, and have strong opinions about the situation than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
4. More likely to be unable to solve the problem than when facilitative strategies are used.
5. More likely to actively seek information about the situation than when persuasive strategies are used.
6. More likely to seek information from the organization than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
7. More likely to consume information, but not seek it out, than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.

When facilitative strategies are used, the public is perceived as:

1. More likely to have goal compatibility than when persuasive strategies are used.
2. Less likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
3. Less likely to see the situation as serious than when all other strategies are used.
4. Less likely to be involved in the situation, personally affected by the situation, and have strong opinions about the situation than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.

Table 19: Pairwise comparisons of attributes of publics across strategies

Attributes of Publics	Strategy (I)	Strategy (J)	Mean Diff.	p-value
Goal Compatibility (3 items combined)	Informative	Facilitative	-.486	1.00
		Persuasive	.864	.103
		Cooperative problem solving	.414	1.000
	Facilitative	Informative	.486	1.000
		Persuasive	1.350	.016
		Cooperative problem solving	.900	.279
	Persuasive	Informative	-.864	.103
		Facilitative	-1.350	.016
		Cooperative problem solving	-.450	1.000
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	-.414	1.000
		Facilitative	-.900	.279
		Persuasive	.450	1.000
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem	Informative	Facilitative	.807	.000
		Persuasive	.486	.031
		Cooperative problem solving	-.264	.509
	Facilitative	Informative	-.807	.000
		Persuasive	-.321	.419
		Cooperative problem solving	-1.071	.000
	Persuasive	Informative	-.486	.031
		Facilitative	.321	.419
		Cooperative problem solving	-.750	.000
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	.264	.509
		Facilitative	1.071	.000
		Persuasive	.750	.000
ExPR2: The public thought the situation was serious.	Informative	Facilitative	.593	.002
		Persuasive	.136	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.350	.144
	Facilitative	Informative	-.593	.002
		Persuasive	-.457	.026
		Cooperative problem solving	-.943	.000
	Persuasive	Informative	-.136	1.000
		Facilitative	.457	.026
		Cooperative problem solving	-.486	.003
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	.350	.144
		Facilitative	.943	.000
		Persuasive	.486	.003
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation	Informative	Facilitative	.157	1.000
		Persuasive	-.086	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.636	.000
	Facilitative	Informative	-.157	1.000
		Persuasive	-.243	.428
		Cooperative problem solving	-.793	.000
	Persuasive	Informative	.086	1.000
		Facilitative	.243	.428
		Cooperative problem solving	-.550	.001
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	.636	.000
		Facilitative	.793	.000
		Persuasive	.550	.001

Table 19—continued

Attributes of Publics	Strategy (I)	Strategy (J)	Mean Diff.	p-value
ExIN2: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	Informative	Facilitative	.086	1.000
		Persuasive	.086	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.329	.021
	Facilitative	Informative	-.086	1.000
		Persuasive	.000	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.414	.003
	Persuasive	Informative	-.086	1.000
		Facilitative	.000	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.414	.003
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	.329	.021
		Facilitative	.414	.003
		Persuasive	.414	.003
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	Informative	Facilitative	.214	1.000
		Persuasive	-.250	.687
		Cooperative problem solving	-.743	.000
	Facilitative	Informative	-.214	1.000
		Persuasive	-.464	.015
		Cooperative problem solving	-.957	.000
	Persuasive	Informative	.250	.687
		Facilitative	.464	.015
		Cooperative problem solving	-.493	.004
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	.743	.000
		Facilitative	.957	.000
		Persuasive	.493	.004
ExCR1: The public could not solve the problem	Informative	Facilitative	.429	.046
		Persuasive	.443	.092
		Cooperative problem solving	-.057	1.000
	Facilitative	Informative	-.429	.046
		Persuasive	-.043	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.486	.009
	Persuasive	Informative	-.443	.092
		Facilitative	-.014	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.500	.023
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	.057	1.000
		Facilitative	.486	.009
		Persuasive	.500	.023
ExCR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	Informative	Facilitative	.200	1.000
		Persuasive	-.286	.508
		Cooperative problem solving	-.229	1.000
	Facilitative	Informative	-.200	1.000
		Persuasive	-.486	.012
		Cooperative problem solving	-.429	.082
	Persuasive	Informative	.286	.508
		Facilitative	.486	.012
		Cooperative problem solving	.057	1.000
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	.229	1.000
		Facilitative	.429	.082
		Persuasive	.057	1.000

Table 19—continued

Attributes of Publics	Strategy (I)	Strategy (J)	Mean Diff.	p-value
Information Seeking 1: The public was actively seeking information about the situation.	Informative	Facilitative	.329	.207
		Persuasive	.543	.010
		Cooperative problem solving	-.286	.546
	Facilitative	Informative	-.329	.207
		Persuasive	.214	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.614	.001
	Persuasive	Informative	-.543	.010
		Facilitative	-.214	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.829	.000
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	.286	.546
		Facilitative	.614	.001
		Persuasive	.829	.000
Information Seeking 2: Members of the public sought information from my organization about the problem.	Informative	Facilitative	.636	.001
		Persuasive	.529	.009
		Cooperative problem solving	-.171	1.000
	Facilitative	Informative	-.636	.001
		Persuasive	-.107	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.807	.000
	Persuasive	Informative	-.529	.009
		Facilitative	.107	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	-.700	.001
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	.171	1.000
		Facilitative	.807	.000
		Persuasive	.700	.001
Information Processing 1: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it out.	Informative	Facilitative	-.086	1.000
		Persuasive	-.236	.729
		Cooperative problem solving	.536	.021
	Facilitative	Informative	.086	1.000
		Persuasive	-.150	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	.621	.001
	Persuasive	Informative	.236	.729
		Facilitative	.150	1.000
		Cooperative problem solving	.771	.000
	Cooperative problem solving	Informative	-.536	.021
		Facilitative	-.621	.001
		Cooperative problem solving	-.771	.000

5. Less likely to have strong opinions about the situation than when persuasive strategies are used.
6. Less likely to be unable to solve the problem than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
7. Less likely to actively seek information about the situation than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.

8. Less likely to seek information from the organization than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
9. More likely to consume information, but not seek it out, than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.

When persuasive strategies are used, the public is perceived as:

1. Less likely to have goal compatibility than when facilitative strategies are used.
2. Less likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
3. More likely to think the situation is serious than when facilitative strategies are used, but less likely to think the situation is serious than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
4. Less likely to be involved in the situation, personally affected by the situation, and have strong opinions about the situation than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
5. More likely to have strong opinions about the situation than when the facilitative strategy is used.
6. Less likely to be unable to solve the problem than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
7. More likely to have constraints that limit its ability to make a difference in the situation than when facilitative strategies are used.
8. Less likely to actively seek information than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
9. Less likely to seek information from the organization than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
10. More likely to consume information, but not seek it out, than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.

When cooperative problem solving strategies are used, the public is perceived as:

1. More likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
2. More likely to see the situation as serious than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.

3. More likely to be involved in the situation, personally affected by the situation, and have strong opinions about the situation than when all of the other strategies are used.
4. More likely to be unable to solve the problem than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
5. More likely to actively seek information than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
6. More likely to seek information from the organization than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
7. Less likely to consume information, but not seek it out, than when all of the other strategies are used.

Public Relations Strategy Effectiveness

Prior to testing H3, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the multiple-item effectiveness index. Since effectiveness was measured separately for each of the strategies, item analysis was conducted separately for each strategy. The alpha scores for the four six-item indices then were averaged to compute an overall reliability score for the effectiveness index. Table 20 provides the results of the reliability analysis. The average alpha coefficient of .90 indicated that the items measuring strategy effectiveness were reliable; therefore, the six effectiveness items were summed to create a single effectiveness measure for each strategy. These were used in subsequent analysis.

Table 20: Reliability scores for effectiveness index

Strategy	Alpha coefficient
Informative	.8815
Facilitative	.8983
Persuasive	.9124
Cooperative problem solving	.9094
Average Reliability	.9004

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to test H3, which posited that attributes of publics are predictors of public relations strategy effectiveness. Prior to full model specification, error term plots for each variable were examined to check assumptions of linearity and homogeneity-of-variance and to detect and remove outliers.

It should be noted that the information processing measure, “The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used,” was excluded from the regression analysis. The means for this item were very high for all strategies and there were no significant differences in item response across strategies. In addition, the item negatively correlated with the other information processing item and positively correlated with the two information seeking items. The high scores, lack of variance, and correlations suggest that this item was not a valid measure of information processing behavior. Furthermore, responses to this item also may reflect social desirability bias. As a result, the information processing item, “The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it out,” was used as the measure of information processing because it appeared to more adequately reflect the conceptual definition.

For each of the four strategies, forward stepwise regression analysis was used to determine the attributes of publics most relevant to prediction of strategy effectiveness. The tolerance level was 0.0001 and the entry criterion was the probability of $F \leq .050$. In the analysis for each strategy, attributes of publics were entered as random-effects unordered independent variables. Strategy effectiveness was the criterion variable. Effect size was estimated using adjusted R^2 to control for the large number of independent

variables in the model. Standardized regression coefficients were assessed to determine the contribution of individual attributes of publics to prediction of strategy effectiveness.

The regression analysis yielded significant correlations for attributes of publics and effectiveness for all of the strategies. The correlations for each strategy are presented in Table 21. Significant correlations are indicated in bold.

The results of the analysis suggest a strong positive correlation between goal compatibility and strategy effectiveness across strategies. In addition, problem recognition was positively related to effectiveness across strategies, although one measure of external problem recognition did not show significance for informative and facilitative strategies. The results for the correlation between constraint recognition and strategy effectiveness are unclear. The external measures were positively related to facilitative strategy effectiveness and negatively related to persuasive strategy effectiveness, and they produced mixed results for informative and cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness. The external measures of involvement consistently produced positive correlations with effectiveness. The internal measure of involvement produced a non-significant negative correlation with informative strategy effectiveness, but a significant positive correlation with effectiveness for the other strategies. Both measures of information seeking produced consistent positive correlations with strategy effectiveness. Information seeking was negatively related to effectiveness for the informative strategy and positively related to effectiveness for the other strategies; however, these relationships were not significant. The details of the regression analysis for each strategy are provided below.

Table 21: Correlations for attributes of publics and strategy effectiveness

Attributes of Publics	INFO EFFECT n=252	FAC EFFECT n=221	PERS EFFECT n=269	COOP EFFECT n=233
Goal Compatibility (3 items combined)	$r=.479$ $p=.000$	$r=.520$ $p=.000$	$r=.578$ $p=.000$	$r=.642$ $p=.000$
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	$r=.089$ $p=.080$	$r=.104$ $p=.062$	$r=.114$ $p=.031$	$r=.322$ $p=.000$
ExPR2: The public thought the situation was serious.	$r=.128$ $p=.021$	$r=.197$ $p=.002$	$r=.123$ $p=.022$	$r=.252$ $p=.000$
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	$r=.456$ $p=.000$	$r=.509$ $p=.000$	$r=.458$ $p=.000$	$r=.559$ $p=.000$
ExCR1: The public could not solve the problem.	$r=.058$ $p=.180$	$r=.027$ $p=.342$	$r=-.035$ $p=.283$	$r=.107$ $p=.051$
ExCR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	$r=-.077$ $p=.113$	$r=.055$ $p=.207$	$r=-.217$ $p=.000$	$r=-.028$ $p=.337$
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	$r=-.146$ $p=.010$	$r=-.092$ $p=.086$	$r=-.084$ $p=.084$	$r=-.073$ $p=.133$
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	$r=.152$ $p=.008$	$r=.344$ $p=.000$	$r=.259$ $p=.000$	$r=.351$ $p=.000$
ExIN2: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	$r=.242$ $p=.000$	$r=.344$ $p=.000$	$r=.192$ $p=.001$	$r=.337$ $p=.000$
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	$r=-.011$ $p=.431$	$r=.198$ $p=.002$	$r=.124$ $p=.021$	$r=.213$ $p=.001$
Information Seeking 1: The public was actively seeking information about the situation.	$r=.132$ $p=.018$	$r=.257$ $p=.000$	$r=.107$ $p=.040$	$r=.293$ $p=.000$
Information Seeking 2: Members of the public sought information from my organization about the problem.	$r=.134$ $p=.017$	$r=.320$ $p=.000$	$r=.156$ $p=.005$	$r=.385$ $p=.000$
Information Processing 1: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it out.	$r=-.011$ $p=.429$	$r=.032$ $p=.317$	$r=.026$ $p=.334$	$r=.001$ $p=.492$

Informative Strategy

An examination of error term plots for each attribute item for the informative strategy indicated that assumptions of linearity and homogeneity-of-variance were met for all the independent variables. Two cases were identified as extreme outliers that substantially affected the conclusions. These cases were excluded from the analysis.

The results of the regression analysis for the informative strategy revealed that three independent variables were significant positive predictors of strategy effectiveness within the regression equation. Specifically, the measure of goal compatibility, the internal measure of problem recognition, and one external measure of involvement accounted for approximately 33% of the unique variance in effectiveness for the informative strategy, $R=.580$, $R^2=.336$, $\text{Adj. } R^2=.328$, $F(3,248)=41.910$, $p=.000$. The regression model for informative strategy effectiveness is presented in Table 22.

Table 22: Regression model for informative strategy effectiveness

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Goal Compatibility	.345	6.110	.000
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	.294	5.177	.000
ExIN2: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	.154	2.930	.004

The results of the regression analysis indicate that goal compatibility is the strongest predictor of informative strategy effectiveness, followed by internal problem recognition, and external involvement. The results suggest that informative strategies are effective when the target public is perceived as: (1) having goal compatibility, (2) wanting to understand the situation better, and (3) being personally affected by the situation.

Facilitative Strategy

An examination of error term plots for each attribute item for the facilitative strategy indicated that assumptions of linearity and homogeneity-of-variance were met for all the independent variables. Three cases were identified as extreme outliers and excluded from the analysis.

The results of the regression analysis for the facilitative strategy revealed that five independent variables were significant predictors of strategy effectiveness within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of goal compatibility, internal problem recognition, external involvement, information processing, and external problem recognition accounted for approximately 40% of the unique variance in effectiveness for the facilitative strategy, $R=.641$, $R^2=.411$, Adj. $R^2=.398$, $F(5,215)=30.046$, $p=.000$. The regression model for facilitative strategy effectiveness is presented in Table 23.

Table 23: Regression model for facilitative strategy effectiveness

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Goal Compatibility	.353	5.899	.000
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	.333	5.258	.000
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	.195	3.326	.001
Information Processing: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it.	.137	2.555	.011
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	-.129	-2.262	.025

The results of the regression analysis indicate that goal compatibility is a positive predictor of facilitative strategy effectiveness. It is also the strongest predictor in the model, followed by internal problem recognition, external involvement, and information

processing behavior, which were also positive predictors of effectiveness. One external measure of problem recognition was found to be a significant negative predictor for facilitative strategy effectiveness. These results suggest that facilitative strategies are most effective when the public is perceived as: (1) having goal compatibility, (2) wanting to understand the situation better, (3) being involved in the situation, (4) consuming information, but not seeking it out, and (5) not recognizing the existence of a problem.

Persuasive Strategy

An examination of error term plots for each attribute item for the persuasive strategy indicated that assumptions of linearity and homogeneity-of-variance were met for all the independent variables. Four cases were identified as outliers and excluded from analysis.

The results of the regression analysis for the persuasive strategy revealed that five independent variables were significant predictors of strategy effectiveness within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of goal compatibility, internal problem recognition, information processing, external involvement, and external constraint recognition accounted for approximately 42% of the unique variance in effectiveness for the persuasive strategy, $R=.657$, $R^2=.432$, Adj. $R^2=.421$, $F(5,263)=40.042$, $p=.000$. The regression model for persuasive strategy effectiveness is presented in Table 24.

The results of the regression analysis indicate that goal compatibility is a positive predictor of persuasive strategy effectiveness. It is also the strongest predictor in the model, followed by internal problem recognition, information processing behavior, and external involvement, which were also positive predictors of effectiveness. One external measure of constraint recognition was found to be a significant negative predictor for facilitative strategy effectiveness. These results suggest that persuasive strategies are most effective when the public is perceived as: (1) having goal compatibility, (2) wanting

to understand the situation better, (3) consuming information, but not seeking it out, (4) being involved in the situation, and (5) not having constraints that limit its ability to make a difference in the situation.

Table 24: Regression model for persuasive strategy effectiveness

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Goal Compatibility	.431	8.057	.000
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	.240	4.170	.000
Information Processing: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it.	.163	3.300	.001
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	.154	3.003	.003
ExCR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	-.134	-2.825	.005

Cooperative Problem Solving Strategy

An examination of error term plots for each attribute item for the cooperative problem solving strategy indicated that assumptions of linearity and homogeneity-of-variance were met for all the independent variables. Five cases were identified as outliers and excluded from analysis. The results of the regression analysis for the cooperative problem solving strategy revealed that four independent variables were significant positive predictors of strategy effectiveness within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of goal compatibility, external involvement, internal problem recognition, and information processing accounted for approximately 52% of the unique variance in effectiveness for the cooperative problem solving strategy, $R=.728$, $R^2=.529$, Adj. $R^2=.521$, $F(4,228)=64.140$, $p=.000$. The regression model for cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness is presented in Table 25.

Table 25: Regression model for cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Goal Compatibility	.480	8.735	.000
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	.240	4.950	.000
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	.245	4.234	.000
Information Processing: The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it.	.130	2.760	.006

The results of the regression analysis indicate that goal compatibility is the strongest predictor of cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness, followed by external involvement, internal problem recognition, and information processing behavior. These results suggest that cooperative problem solving strategies are most effective when the public is perceived as: (1) having goal compatibility, (2) being involved in the situation, (3) wanting to understand the situation better, and (4) consuming information.

Goal Compatibility

For each strategy in the repeated measures design, bivariate correlation analysis using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was conducted to determine the relationship of goal compatibility to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 26. Significant correlations are indicated in bold.

It should be noted that the number of responses analyzed for each correlation varies due to variance in strategy use and item nonresponse. For the informative strategy, the number of responses in the analysis ranged from 270 to 274. The number of responses in the analysis for the facilitative strategy ranged from 238 to 241. For the persuasive

strategy, the number of responses in the analysis ranged from 296 to 301. The number of responses analyzed for the cooperative problem solving strategy ranged from 254 to 257.

Table 26: Correlations for goal compatibility and STP independent variables

Attributes of Publics	INFO GC	FAC GC	PERS GC	COOP GC
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	$r=-.059$ $p=.329$	$r=.227$ $p=.000$	$r=.119$ $p=.040$	$r=.213$ $p=.001$
ExPR2: The public thought the situation was serious.	$r=-.047$ $p=.440$	$r=.218$ $p=.001$	$r=.063$ $p=.282$	$r=.137$ $p=.028$
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	$r=.370$ $p=.000$	$r=.471$ $p=.000$	$r=.483$ $p=.000$	$r=.529$ $p=.000$
ExCR1: The public could not solve the problem.	$r=-.039$ $p=.526$	$r=-.021$ $p=.742$	$r=-.140$ $p=.016$	$r=.018$ $p=.781$
ExCR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	$r=-.061$ $p=.318$	$r=.037$ $p=.571$	$r=-.165$ $p=.004$	$r=-.057$ $p=.362$
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	$r=-.199$ $p=.001$	$r=-.231$ $p=.000$	$r=-.143$ $p=.013$	$r=-.082$ $p=.188$
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	$r=-.026$ $p=.666$	$r=.247$ $p=.000$	$r=.110$ $p=.059$	$r=.123$ $p=.050$
ExIN2: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	$r=.090$ $p=.138$	$r=.324$ $p=.000$	$r=.104$ $p=.071$	$r=.269$ $p=.000$
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	$r=-.139$ $p=.022$	$r=.133$ $p=.039$	$r=-.042$ $p=.468$	$r=-.053$ $p=.398$

The correlation analysis revealed that goal compatibility was positively related to the measure of internal problem recognition for all four strategies. The external measures of problem recognition correlated negatively with goal compatibility for the informative strategy, but positively for the other three strategies. The relationship between goal

compatibility and constraint recognition is unclear. All of the items measuring constraint recognition negatively correlated with goal compatibility when the informative and persuasive strategies were used, but they produced mixed results when the facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies were used. One measure of external involvement produced positive correlations across all of the strategies; however, the other measure of external involvement and the measure of internal involvement produced mixed results.

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the influence of goal compatibility on the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics. Specifically, the situational theory of publics was tested with the addition of the goal compatibility measure. Two forward stepwise regression analyses were conducted for each strategy. In the first analysis, items measuring problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, and goal compatibility were entered into the regression equation as random-effects unordered predictor variables. The two items measuring information seeking behavior were combined into a single information seeking measure, which served as the criterion variable. In the second analysis, the same predictor variables were entered into the equation, but the information processing item, "The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it out," was entered as the criterion variable.

Before conducting the regression analysis, error term plots for each independent variable were assessed. Assumptions appeared to be met for all variables. In addition, two cases identified as outliers were removed from analysis of the cooperative problem solving strategy. No outliers were identified for the other three strategies. Table 27 shows the correlations for the first regression analysis. Significant correlations are in bold.

Table 27: Correlations for attributes of publics and information seeking behavior

Attributes of Publics	INFO Info Seeking n=258	FAC Info Seeking n=229	PERS Info Seeking n=280	COOP Info Seeking n=242
Goal Compatibility	$r=.106$ $p=.044$	$r=.320$ $p=.000$	$r=.164$ $p=.003$	$r=.294$ $p=.000$
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	$r=.419$ $p=.000$	$r=.443$ $p=.000$	$r=.476$ $p=.000$	$r=.642$ $p=.000$
ExPR2: The public thought the situation was serious.	$r=.449$ $p=.000$	$r=.448$ $p=.000$	$r=.362$ $p=.000$	$r=.524$ $p=.000$
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	$r=.390$ $p=.000$	$r=.506$ $p=.000$	$r=.384$ $p=.000$	$r=.536$ $p=.000$
ExCR1: The public could not solve the problem.	$r=.170$ $p=.003$	$r=.110$ $p=.049$	$r=.111$ $p=.031$	$r=.277$ $p=.000$
ExCR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	$r=.052$ $p=.203$	$r=.258$ $p=.000$	$r=.059$ $p=.162$	$r=.129$ $p=.022$
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	$r=-.224$ $p=.000$	$r=-.190$ $p=.002$	$r=-.148$ $p=.006$	$r=-.066$ $p=.152$
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	$r=.490$ $p=.000$	$r=.466$ $p=.000$	$r=.359$ $p=.000$	$r=.549$ $p=.000$
ExIN2: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	$r=.269$ $p=.000$	$r=.381$ $p=.000$	$r=.215$ $p=.000$	$r=.447$ $p=.000$
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	$r=.442$ $p=.000$	$r=.491$ $p=.000$	$r=.311$ $p=.000$	$r=.478$ $p=.000$

The results indicate that the items measuring problem recognition produced significant positive correlations with information seeking behavior across all strategies. Similarly, the items measuring involvement had significant positive correlations with information seeking behavior across strategies. The two measures of external constraint recognition produced positive correlations with information seeking behavior across strategies; however, they were not strong and two were not significant. The measure of internal

constraint recognition produced negative correlations across all strategies, ranging from weak to moderate in strength.

The results of the regression analysis for the informative strategy revealed that five independent variables were significant predictors of information seeking behavior within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of external and internal involvement, external and internal problem recognition, and internal constraint recognition accounted for approximately 39% of the unique variance in information seeking behavior for the informative strategy, $R=.634$, $R^2=.402$, Adj. $R^2=.390$, $F(5,252)=33.845$, $p=.000$. The regression model for information seeking behavior for the informative strategy is presented in Table 28.

The results of the regression analysis indicate that involvement and problem recognition are positive predictors of information seeking behavior for the informative strategy. These variables produced moderate Betas. The measure of internal constraint recognition was a negative predictor of information seeking behavior for this strategy.

Table 28: Regression model for information seeking for the informative strategy

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
ExINI: The public was highly involved in the situation.	.231	3.805	.000
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	.226	4.373	.000
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	.191	3.477	.001
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	.204	3.415	.001
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	-.134	-2.637	.009

The results of the regression analysis for the facilitative strategy revealed that six independent variables were significant predictors of information seeking behavior within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of external and internal problem recognition, external and internal involvement, and external and internal constraint recognition accounted for approximately 43% of the unique variance in information seeking behavior for the facilitative strategy, $R=.663$, $R^2=.440$, Adj. $R^2=.425$, $F(6,222)=29.055$, $p=.000$. The regression model for information seeking behavior for the facilitative strategy is presented in Table 29.

Table 29: Regression model for information seeking for the facilitative strategy

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	.270	4.659	.000
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	.171	2.481	.014
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	.175	2.986	.003
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	.176	2.721	.007
ExCR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	.149	2.706	.007
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	-.115	-2.102	.037

The results of the regression analysis indicate that problem recognition, involvement, and constraint recognition are positive predictors of information seeking behavior for the facilitative strategy. These variables produced small to moderate Betas. As in the informative strategy, the measure of internal constraint recognition was a negative predictor of information seeking behavior.

The results of the regression analysis for the persuasive strategy revealed that three independent variables were significant predictors of information seeking behavior within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of external and internal problem recognition and external involvement accounted for approximately 33% of the unique variance in information seeking behavior for the persuasive strategy, $R=.577$, $R^2=.333$, Adj. $R^2=.325$, $F(3,276)=45.870$, $p=.000$. The regression model for information seeking behavior for the persuasive strategy is presented in Table 30. The results of the regression analysis indicate that problem recognition and involvement are positive predictors of information seeking behavior for the persuasive strategy. These variables produced moderate Betas.

Table 30: Regression model for information seeking for the persuasive strategy

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	.377	7.299	.000
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	.244	4.605	.000
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	.165	3.045	.003

The results of the regression analysis for the cooperative problem solving strategy revealed that five independent variables were significant predictors of information seeking behavior within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of external and internal problem recognition, external and internal involvement, and internal constraint recognition accounted for approximately 58% of the unique variance in information seeking behavior for the cooperative problem solving strategy, $R=.766$, $R^2=.586$, Adj. $R^2=.577$, $F(5,236)=66.815$, $p=.000$. The regression model for information seeking

behavior for the cooperative problem solving strategy is presented in Table 31. The results of the regression analysis indicate that problem recognition, involvement, and constraint recognition are positive predictors of information seeking behavior for the cooperative problem solving strategy.

Table 31: Regression model for information seeking for the cooperative strategy

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	.339	6.449	.000
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better	.298	6.455	.000
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	.185	3.278	.001
ExCR1: The public could not solve the problem.	.143	3.345	.001
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	.141	2.633	.009

Information processing behavior was examined by conducting a second regression analysis for each strategy. The same predictor variables used in the first analysis were entered into the equation, but the information processing item, “The members of the public consumed information given to them, but they did not actively seek it out,” was entered as the criterion variable.

Prior to conducting the regression analysis, error term plots for each independent variable were assessed to ensure the assumptions of linearity and homogeneity-of-variance were met. In addition, outliers were identified and excluded from analysis when appropriate. Assumptions appeared to be met for all variables. Two cases identified as outliers were removed from analysis of the cooperative problem solving strategy. No

outliers were identified for the other strategies. The correlations for the second series of regression analyses are shown in Table 32. Significant correlations are indicated in bold.

Table 32: Correlations for attributes of publics and information processing behavior

Attributes of Publics	INFO Info Seeking n=259	FAC Info Seeking n=229	PERS Info Seeking n=282	COOP Info Seeking n=245
Goal Compatibility	$r=-.064$ $p=.151$	$r=-.091$ $p=.086$	$r=-.082$ $p=.084$	$r=-.035$ $p=.294$
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	$r=-.112$ $p=.036$	$r=-.127$ $p=.028$	$r=-.291$ $p=.000$	$r=-.250$ $p=.000$
ExPR2: The public thought the situation was serious.	$r=-.120$ $p=.027$	$r=-.092$ $p=.083$	$r=-.220$ $p=.000$	$r=-.163$ $p=.005$
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	$r=-.190$ $p=.001$	$r=-.136$ $p=.007$	$r=-.275$ $p=.000$	$r=-.204$ $p=.001$
ExCR1: The public could not solve the problem.	$r=-.061$ $p=.165$	$r=-.082$ $p=.109$	$r=-.037$ $p=.269$	$r=-.057$ $p=.187$
ExCR2: There were constraints that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	$r=-.048$ $p=.222$	$r=-.034$ $p=.302$	$r=-.014$ $p=.405$	$r=-.118$ $p=.032$
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	$r=-.260$ $p=.000$	$r=-.275$ $p=.000$	$r=-.179$ $p=.001$	$r=-.330$ $p=.000$
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	$r=-.287$ $p=.000$	$r=-.165$ $p=.006$	$r=-.240$ $p=.000$	$r=-.225$ $p=.000$
ExIN2: The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	$r=-.013$ $p=.419$	$r=-.080$ $p=.114$	$r=-.144$ $p=.008$	$r=-.114$ $p=.038$
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	$r=-.202$ $p=.001$	$r=-.133$ $p=.022$	$r=-.229$ $p=.000$	$r=-.211$ $p=.000$

The results indicate that the items measuring problem recognition produced negative correlations with information processing behavior across all strategies. All of these correlations were significant except one. Similarly, the items measuring involvement negatively correlated with information processing behavior consistently across strategies,

and all but two correlations were significant. The two measures of external constraint recognition produced inconsistent results; however, the measure of internal constraint recognition produced significant positive correlations across all strategies.

The results of the regression analysis for the informative strategy revealed that two independent variables were significant predictors of information processing behavior within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of external involvement and internal constraint recognition accounted for approximately 13% of the unique variance in information processing behavior for the informative strategy, $R=.368$, $R^2=.135$, Adj. $R^2=.128$, $F(2,256)=20.011$, $p=.000$. The regression model for information processing behavior for the informative strategy is presented in Table 33. The results of the analysis indicate that external involvement is a negative predictor of information processing behavior and internal constraint recognition is a positive predictor of information processing behavior. These variables produced moderate betas.

Table 33: Regression model for information processing for the informative strategy

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
ExIN1: The public was highly involved in the situation.	-.262	-4.473	.000
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	.231	3.945	.000

The results of the regression analysis for the facilitative strategy revealed that two independent variables were significant predictors of information processing behavior within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of internal constraint recognition and internal involvement accounted for approximately 8% of the unique variance in information processing behavior for the facilitative strategy, $R=.303$, $R^2=.092$, Adj.

$R^2=.084$, $F(2,226)=11.440$, $p=.000$. The regression model for information processing behavior for the facilitative strategy is presented in Table 34. The results of the analysis indicate that internal constraint recognition is a positive predictor of information processing behavior and internal involvement is a negative predictor of information processing behavior.

Table 34: Regression model for information processing for the facilitative strategy

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	.273	4.299	.000
InIN: The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	-.127	-2.006	.046

The results of the regression analysis for the persuasive strategy revealed that three independent variables were significant predictors of information processing behavior within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of external and internal problem recognition and internal constraint recognition accounted for approximately 14% of the unique variance in information processing behavior for the persuasive strategy, $R=.386$, $R^2=.149$, Adj. $R^2=.140$, $F(3,278)=16.253$, $p=.000$. The regression model for information processing behavior for the persuasive strategy is presented in Table 35.

Table 35: Regression model for information processing for the persuasive strategy

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	-.228	-3.990	.000
InPR: The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	-.221	-3.926	.000
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	.124	2.202	.029

The results of the regression analysis for the cooperative problem solving strategy revealed that two independent variables were significant predictors of information processing behavior within the regression equation. Specifically, measures of internal constraint recognition and external problem recognition accounted for approximately 15% of the unique variance in information processing behavior for the cooperative problem solving strategy, $R=.396$, $R^2=.157$, Adj. $R^2=.150$, $F(2,242)=22.502$, $p=.000$. The regression model for information processing behavior for the cooperative problem solving strategy is shown in Table 36. The results of the analysis indicate that constraint recognition is a positive predictor of information processing behavior and problem recognition is a negative predictor of information processing behavior.

Table 36: Regression model for information processing for the cooperative strategy

Predictor	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
InCR: The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	.309	5.201	.000
ExPR1: The public recognized the existence of a problem.	-.219	-3.697	.000

This chapter summarized the results of the data analysis for this study. Chapter 5 discusses these results and draws conclusions about the meaningfulness of the findings. In addition, it discusses the limitations of this study and its significance to public relations theory, practice, and pedagogy.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of the data analysis presented in Chapter 4. The chapter begins by providing a summary of the findings. Next, a detailed analysis of conclusions related to the hypotheses, propositions, and research questions of interest is provided. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations of this research. Finally, the significance of this study to public relations theory, practice, and pedagogy are discussed. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research utilizing knowledge gained from this study.

Summary of Findings

This study examined the influence of attributes of publics on public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations. Specifically, this study attempted to replicate and extend previous research by examining how the attributes of problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, and goal compatibility are related to use of informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving strategies in organizations and the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving organizational goals.

Results indicate that informative and persuasive strategies are used significantly more often than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies in the implementation of public relations campaigns. Findings support the hypothesis that perceived attributes of publics influence public relations strategy use in organizations. Specifically, problem recognition produced the strongest univariate effect on strategy use. Mixed support was

found for propositions related to the perceived attributes of publics most significant to use of informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving strategies.

Results indicate that perceived attributes of publics are predictors of public relations strategy effectiveness. Goal compatibility was found to be the strongest predictor of effectiveness across strategies. Results also suggest that goal compatibility is related to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement; however, goal compatibility does not appear to influence the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics. Furthermore, support was found for the predictions of the situational theory of publics.

Discussion of Frequency of Strategy Use

Hypothesis 1 stated that, in the implementation of public relations campaigns, informative and persuasive strategies are used more frequently than facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies. The results of repeated measures ANOVA support this hypothesis. Statistically significant differences in frequency of strategy use were found across strategies. Specifically, 16.6% of the variance in frequency of use measures was accounted for by strategy type, Wilks' $\Lambda=.834$, $F(3, 265)=17.64$, $p=.000$, multivariate $\eta^2=.166$.

Persuasive strategies were found to be used most often in the implementation of public relations campaigns. Informative strategies were the second most often used, followed by facilitative and cooperative problem solving strategies. Paired t tests indicated that informative and persuasive strategies were used significantly more often than facilitative and persuasive strategies. These results are consistent with previous research concerning

public relations strategy use in organizations. A comparison of the findings of this study and frequency of strategy use reported in previous research is provided in Table 37.

Table 37: Comparison of frequency of strategy use in research

Page & Hazleton (1999)	Page (2000a)	Page (2000b)	Page (2002)
Persuasive	Informative	Informative	Persuasive
Informative	Persuasive	Persuasive	Informative
Cooperative Problem Solving	Cooperative Problem Solving	Facilitative	Facilitative
Facilitative	Facilitative	Cooperative Problem Solving	Cooperative Problem Solving
Promise and Reward	Promise and Reward	Threat and Punishment	
Bargaining	Threat and Punishment	Promise and Reward	
Threat and Punishment	Bargaining	Bargaining	

It should be noted that Page and Hazleton (1999) found that strategy type accounted for 40% of the variance in frequency of use across strategies, which is a much larger percent of variance explained than in the present study. This inconsistency is likely due to the fact that the 1999 study tested all seven of the public relations strategies in Hazleton's taxonomy. Specifically, coercive and bargaining strategies were included in the original analysis and were found to be the least frequently used strategies, which would account for more variance in frequency of use across strategies.

The finding that persuasive strategies are used most frequently in the implementation of public relations campaigns is not surprising. The fact that organizations implement persuasive strategies intended to influence the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of publics is well established, although the ethical implications of persuasion have

challenged public relations scholars. This is illustrated by the ongoing debate regarding the symmetrical (balanced/ethical) versus asymmetrical (persuasive/unethical) practice of public relations (Heath, 2001). The past dichotomy of these two worldviews has recently been merged into a mixed-motive approach (J. E. Grunig, 2001) that recognizes “the reality that public relations practitioners are expected to advance the interests of their organizations rather than easily abandon them in deference to the interests of its publics” (Heath, 2001, p. 3).

The finding that gender and organization type influence public relations strategy use in organizations is particularly interesting. Specifically, results indicate that female practitioners use facilitative strategies significantly more often than their male counterparts. This is consistent with a growing literature that suggests women practitioners value cooperation, collaboration, and relationship building, and have a “propensity for fostering interdependence and mutuality” (Hon, L. A. Grunig, & Dozier, 1992, p. 430). Facilitative strategies focus on offering assistance, providing resources, and helping publics achieve predisposed objectives. The idea that women are more likely to initiate communication strategies characterized by ‘giving’ and ‘helping’ is supported by feminist research in public relations.

In addition, organizations devoted to health care were found to use facilitative strategies significantly more often than other types of organizations. According to Hetherington, Ekachai, and Parkinson (2001), the health care industry has moved from a “medical model” emphasizing treatment to a “wellness model” emphasizing prevention (p. 573). The authors stated that, “unlike the medical model, which places the physician at the center of business, the wellness model places the patient at the center” (p. 575). It is

likely that health care organizations employ facilitative strategies to help patients prevent illness by providing resources to empower them.

Discussion of Attributes of Publics and Strategy Use

Hypothesis 2 predicted that perceived attributes of publics influence public relations strategy use in organizations. The results of doubly multivariate repeated measures ANOVA support this hypothesis. Specifically, strategy type accounted for 58% of the variance in attributes of publics across strategies, Wilks' $\Lambda=.420$, $F(42,98)=3.219$, $p=.000$, multivariate $\eta^2=.580$. According to Green et al. (2000), eta-squared values of .01, .06, and .14 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. The effect size of .580 produced by the ANOVA suggests a strong relationship between perceived attributes of publics and public relations strategy use.

The measure of external problem recognition, "The public recognized the existence of a problem," produced the largest univariate effect size, $\eta^2=.114$. The other measure of external problem recognition, "The public thought the situation was serious," also produced a large univariate effect size in comparison to the other items, $\eta^2=.087$. This suggests that practitioners' perceptions of problem recognition in publics have the strongest influence on strategy use. The measure of internal constraint recognition, "The public did not understand the problem enough to do anything about it," also produced a large univariate effect size in relation to the other items, $\eta^2=.092$. Goal compatibility and external involvement produced the smallest effect sizes.

These results are fairly consistent with the results of Page and Hazleton's study, although they found that strategy type accounted for 72.6% of the variance in attributes of publics across strategies. The difference in explained variance between the two studies

is likely due to the difference in number of attributes tested. Page and Hazleton examined nine items related to attributes of publics and this study examined 14 attribute measures.

Informative Strategy

Proposition 2.1 predicted that when informative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition and low goal compatibility. The results of multiple pairwise comparisons indicate that when informative strategies are used, the public is perceived as:

1. More likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
2. More likely to think the problem is serious than when facilitative strategies are used.
3. Less likely to be involved in the situation, personally affected by the situation, and have strong opinions about the situation than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
4. More likely to be unable to solve the problem than when facilitative strategies are used.
5. More likely to actively seek information about the situation than when persuasive strategies are used.
6. More likely to seek information from the organization than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
7. More likely to consume information, but not seek it out, than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.

These results do not support the proposition. Specifically, the results indicate that practitioners perceive greater problem recognition in publics when informative strategies are used than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used. Although the means for both external problem recognition measures were lower for the informative strategy than for the cooperative problem solving strategy, they were not significantly lower.

According to Zaltman and Duncan (1977), informative strategies can be used to increase problem recognition and establish perceptions that a known problem can be resolved. This implies that varying levels of problem recognition are likely to exist when informative strategies are used, depending on the situation.

In addition, the mean for goal compatibility when the informative strategy was used did not differ significantly from the mean for goal compatibility when the other strategies were used. Although it was lower than the mean for the facilitative strategy, it was higher than the mean for the persuasive and cooperative problem solving strategies. Thus, no conclusions can be drawn about the influence of perceived goal compatibility on use of informative strategies.

No support was found for the proposition; however, when compared to previous research, the results of this study provide valuable new information about the influence of attributes of publics on use of informative strategies. Specifically, Page and Hazleton's reported the following concerning use of informative strategies:

When the informative strategy is used, the public is significantly less likely to see the problem the same way as the organization than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used. In addition, when the informative strategy is used, the goals of the public are significantly less likely to be compatible with the goals of the organization than when the cooperative problem solving and facilitative strategies are used.

These results could not be replicated because the item, "The public saw the problem the same way as my organization," was not tested. It was excluded from the instrument due to its similarity to items measuring goal compatibility. It is possible that Page and Hazleton's conclusion regarding low problem recognition when informative strategies are used was flawed because of measurement error. This could explain the lack of support shown for Proposition 2.1, which was based on Page and Hazleton's results.

Facilitative Strategy

Proposition 2.2 stated that when facilitative strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having moderate problem recognition, high goal compatibility, high involvement, and information processing behavior. The results indicate that when facilitative strategies are used, the public is perceived as:

1. More likely to have goal compatibility than when persuasive strategies are used.
2. Less likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
3. Less likely to see the situation as serious than when all other strategies are used.
4. Less likely to be involved in the situation, personally affected by the situation, and have strong opinions about the situation than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
5. Less likely to have strong opinions about the situation than when persuasive strategies are used.
6. Less likely to be unable to solve the problem than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
7. Less likely to actively seek information about the situation than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
8. Less likely to seek information from the organization than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
9. More likely to consume information, but not seek it out, than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.

These results provide mixed support for the proposition. Specifically, the results indicate that practitioners perceive goal compatibility as being higher in publics when facilitative strategies are used than when persuasive strategies are used. In addition, the mean for the goal compatibility measure was higher for the facilitative strategy than for the informative and cooperative problem solving strategies, although it was not

significantly higher. Nevertheless, support is indicated for the prediction that practitioners perceive publics as having high goal compatibility when facilitative strategies are used.

In addition, results indicate that, generally, publics are perceived as having low problem recognition, low involvement, and information processing behavior when facilitative strategies are used. The proposition is supported by the finding of high goal compatibility and information processing behavior; however, the finding of low problem recognition and low involvement is contrary to the proposition.

The results also suggest that the public is perceived as having low constraint recognition when facilitative strategies are used. The means for both external constraint recognition measures were lower for the facilitative strategy than for all of the other strategies. This result seems counterintuitive since facilitative strategies provide resources to publics that allow them to act in ways they are already predisposed to act. Lack of resources would seem to be a constraint. However, it is possible that when constraint recognition is low, facilitative strategies are used because there is less resistance from members of the public, making it easier to facilitate action.

In addition, analysis of demographic data revealed that health and welfare organizations use facilitative strategies more often than other types of organizations. When considered from this organizational perspective, the finding of low problem recognition, low constraint recognition, and low involvement is more easily explained. The concept of preventative medicine implies that there is not yet a (health) problem, only the potential for one. Therefore, members of a public may neither recognize nor be involved in the problem, and constraint recognition would not apply. In this context, information seeking would likely be low because no awareness of a problem exists, and

information processing would likely be high since most people perceive health issues as important. In such a situation, the objective of a facilitative strategy would likely be to increase problem recognition and involvement, while maintaining low levels of constraint recognition in order to induce members of the public to act.

Page and Hazleton's reported the following concerning use of facilitative strategies:

When the facilitative strategy is used, the public is significantly less likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used. The public is also less likely to be actively seeking information than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used. However, the public is more likely to consume information given to them, but not actively seek it out, than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used. In addition, when the facilitative strategy is used, the public is significantly more likely to see the problem the same way as the organization, be personally affected by the situation, and have goals that are compatible with the goals of the organization than when the persuasive strategy is used. The public also is significantly more likely to have goals that are compatible with the organization's goals when the facilitative strategy is used than when the informative strategy is used.

The results of this study are similar to the results reported by Page and Hazleton. This can be seen in numbers 1, 2, 7, and 9 in the above list of findings for the facilitative strategy. In the present study, however, no conclusions could be drawn regarding the differences in involvement for facilitative and persuasive strategies or the differences in goal compatibility for facilitative and informative strategies.

Persuasive Strategy

Proposition 2.3 stated that when persuasive strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having low problem recognition, low goal compatibility, low involvement, and information seeking behavior. The results indicate that when persuasive strategies are used, the public is perceived as:

1. Less likely to have goal compatibility than when facilitative strategies are used.

2. Less likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
3. More likely to think the situation is serious than when facilitative strategies are used, but less likely to think the situation is serious than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
4. Less likely to be involved in the situation, personally affected by the situation, and have strong opinions about the situation than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
5. More likely to have strong opinions about the situation than when the facilitative strategy is used.
6. Less likely to be unable to solve the problem than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
7. More likely to have constraints that limit its ability to make a difference in the situation than when facilitative strategies are used.
8. Less likely to actively seek information than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
9. Less likely to seek information from the organization than when informative and cooperative problem solving strategies are used.
10. More likely to consume information, but not seek it out, than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.

Again, the results provide mixed support for the proposition. Findings suggest that when persuasive strategies are used, publics are perceived as having low goal compatibility. In fact, the mean for the goal compatibility measure was lower for the persuasive strategy than for all of the other strategies. Results also indicate that, generally, publics are perceived as having low problem recognition, mixed levels of involvement, less information seeking behavior, and more information processing behavior when persuasive strategies are used. The finding of low goal compatibility and low problem recognition supports the proposition; however, the finding of less information seeking and more information processing, as well as the mixed result for involvement, is contrary to the proposition.

Support for the finding that publics are perceived as less active and more passive when persuasive strategies are used is provided by what Miller referred to as the paradigm of passive persuasion (1989; Miller & Burgoon, 1973).

In this paradigm, the persuader, who is the primary symbolizing agent, encodes and transmits a message to a relatively passive audience. Even when the opportunity for audience feedback exists . . . persuadees are relegated to a relatively inactive role: Persuasion is conceptualized as a unidirectional process where the persuader *acts* and persuadees are *acted upon*. (Miller, 1989, p. 53)

According to Miller, this paradigm accurately describes the typical circumstances in persuasive transactions involving large audiences, such as those targeted for mass media persuasive messages. The paradigm of passive persuasion may explain the findings related to use of persuasive strategies in public relations.

The results of this study also provide mixed support for perceived constraint recognition in publics when persuasive strategies are used. Specifically, publics are perceived as having more constraints when persuasive strategies are used than when facilitative strategies are used, but more ability to solve the problem than when cooperative problem solving strategies are used.

In Page and Hazleton's 1999 study, the following results were found concerning use of persuasive strategies:

When the persuasive strategy is used, the public is significantly less likely to recognize the existence of a problem, see the problem the same way as the organization, and actively seek information than when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used. Also, the public is significantly less likely to see the problem the same way as the organization, be personally affected by the situation, and have goals that are compatible with the organization's goals when persuasive strategies are used than when facilitative strategies are used.

The results of this study are similar to the results reported by Page and Hazleton. This can be seen in numbers 1, 2, and 8 in the above list of findings for the persuasive

strategy. In the present study, however, no conclusions could be drawn regarding the differences in involvement for persuasive and facilitative strategies.

Cooperative Problem Solving Strategy

Proposition 2.4 predicted that when cooperative problem-solving strategies are used, practitioners perceive the public as having high problem recognition, high goal compatibility, and information seeking behavior. The results indicate that when cooperative problem solving strategies are used, the public is perceived as:

1. More likely to recognize the existence of a problem than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
2. More likely to see the situation as serious than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
3. More likely to be involved in the situation, personally affected by the situation, and have strong opinions about the situation than when all of the other strategies are used.
4. More likely to be unable to solve the problem than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
5. More likely to actively seek information than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
6. More likely to seek information from the organization than when facilitative and persuasive strategies are used.
7. Less likely to consume information, but not seek it out, than when all of the other strategies are used.

These results indicate mixed support for this proposition. Specifically, the results suggest that publics are generally perceived as having high problem recognition when cooperative problem solving strategies are used. The means for the two external problem recognition measures were higher for the cooperative problem solving strategy than for all of the other strategies. Publics also are perceived as actively seeking information when cooperative problem solving strategies are used. The means for both information seeking

measures were higher for this strategy than for the other strategies. No support for the prediction of high goal compatibility was found. Results indicated that the mean for goal compatibility was higher for the cooperative problem solving strategy than for the persuasive strategy, but it was lower than the means for informative and facilitative strategies. However, these differences were not significant.

In addition, the results provide support for the conclusion that publics are perceived as more involved when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used than when all of the other strategies are used. All three measures of involvement produced significantly higher mean scores for the cooperative problem solving strategy than for the other strategies. Similarly, the results indicate that publics are perceived as having high constraint recognition when cooperative problem solving strategies are used. Both measures of external constraint recognition produced high mean scores for this strategy.

In Page and Hazleton's 1999 study, the following results were found concerning use of cooperative problem solving strategies:

When the cooperative problem solving strategy is used, the public is significantly more likely to recognize the existence of a problem and actively seek information than when facilitative or persuasive strategies are used. The public is also significantly more likely to see the problem the same way as the organization when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used than when the informative or persuasive strategies are used. In addition, the goals of the public are more likely to be compatible with the goals of the organization when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used than when the informative strategy is used. However, the public is less likely to consume information when the cooperative problem solving strategy is used than when the facilitative strategy is used.

The results of the current study are similar to the results reported by Page and Hazleton. This can be seen in numbers 1, 6, and 7 in the above list of findings for the cooperative problem solving strategy. In the present study, however, no conclusions

could be drawn regarding the differences in goal compatibility for cooperative problem solving and informative strategies.

Public Relations Strategy Effectiveness

Hypothesis 3 posited that perceived attributes of publics are predictors of public relations strategy effectiveness. The results of multiple regression analysis support this hypothesis. Specifically, the results indicate that perceived attributes of publics account for a large percentage of the variance in strategy effectiveness for all of the public relations strategies examined in this study. These findings are discussed in detail below.

Informative Strategy

Proposition 3.1 stated that informative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition. The results of the regression analysis support this proposition. Specifically, measures of goal compatibility, internal problem recognition, and external involvement accounted for approximately 33% of the unique variance in informative strategy effectiveness, $R=.580$, $R^2=.336$, Adj. $R^2=.328$, $F(3,248)=41.910$, $p=.000$. The results of the regression analysis indicate that goal compatibility is the strongest predictor of informative strategy effectiveness, followed by internal problem recognition and external involvement. These measures function as positive predictors of informative strategy effectiveness.

The results suggest that informative strategies are most effective when the target public is perceived as: (1) having goal compatibility, (2) wanting to understand the situation better, and (3) being personally affected by the situation.

Facilitative Strategy

Proposition 3.2 stated that facilitative strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and information processing behavior. The results of the regression

analysis support this proposition. Specifically, measures of goal compatibility, internal problem recognition, external involvement, information processing, and external problem recognition accounted for approximately 40% of the unique variance in facilitative strategy effectiveness, $R=.641$, $R^2=.411$, Adj. $R^2=.398$, $F(5,215)=30.046$, $p=.000$. All of the measures function as positive predictors of facilitative strategy effectiveness except external problem recognition. In addition, goal compatibility was found to be the strongest predictor of facilitative strategy effectiveness.

The results suggest that facilitative strategies are most effective when the public is perceived as: (1) having goal compatibility, (2) wanting to understand the situation better, (3) being involved in the situation, (4) consuming information but not seeking it out, and (5) not recognizing the existence of a problem.

Persuasive Strategy

Proposition 3.3 stated that persuasive strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility. The results of the regression analysis support this proposition. Specifically, measures of goal compatibility, internal problem recognition, information processing, external involvement, and external constraint recognition accounted for approximately 42% of the unique variance in persuasive strategy effectiveness, $R=.657$, $R^2=.432$, Adj. $R^2=.421$, $F(5,263)=40.042$, $p=.000$. All of the measures function as positive predictors of facilitative strategy effectiveness except external constraint recognition. Again, goal compatibility was found to be the strongest predictor of persuasive strategy effectiveness.

These results suggest that persuasive strategies are most effective when the public is perceived as: (1) having goal compatibility, (2) wanting to understand the situation better,

(3) consuming information but not seeking it out, (4) being involved in the situation, and (5) not having constraints that limit its ability to make a difference in the situation.

Cooperative Problem Solving Strategy

Proposition 3.4 stated that cooperative problem solving strategy effectiveness is predicted by perceived goal compatibility and problem recognition. The results of the regression analysis support this proposition. Specifically, measures of goal compatibility, external involvement, internal problem recognition, and information processing accounted for approximately 52% of the unique variance in effectiveness for the cooperative problem solving strategy, $R=.728$, $R^2=.529$, Adj. $R^2=.521$, $F(4,228)=64.140$, $p=.000$. These measures function as positive predictors of effectiveness for the cooperative problem solving strategy, and goal compatibility was found to be the strongest predictor of effectiveness.

These results suggest that cooperative problem solving strategies are most effective when the public is perceived as: (1) having goal compatibility, (2) being involved in the situation, (3) wanting to understand the situation better, and (4) consuming information.

The results of the analysis of public relations strategy effectiveness are consistent with results reported by Page and Hazleton (1999). However, the findings of the present study add new insight into the attributes of publics most important to prediction of effectiveness for each of the four strategies.

Discussion of Goal Compatibility and the Situational Theory of Publics

This study attempted to develop a greater understanding of how goal compatibility functions as a receiver variable in public relations. Specifically, this research sought to determine if goal compatibility is related to the independent and dependent variables of the situational theory of publics.

Research Question 1 asked if goal compatibility is related to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement in publics. The results of correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between goal compatibility and all of the independent variables in the situational theory. The most consistent relationship was found between goal compatibility and the measure of internal problem recognition, “The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.” The results indicated strong positive correlations between goal compatibility and this measure across all four public relations strategies. The external measures of problem recognition produced inconsistent correlations across strategies.

The weakest and most unstable relationship was found between goal compatibility and constraint recognition. Generally, the correlations between goal compatibility and the measures of internal and external constraint recognition were not significant, and directional inconsistency was found across strategies. Similar results were found between the measures of involvement and goal compatibility, although the relationships were somewhat more consistent than those produced by the constraint recognition items.

These results make it difficult to draw any general conclusions about the relationship between goal compatibility and the independent variables in the situational theory. Clearly, further research is needed to understand how goal compatibility is related to problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement.

Research Question 2 asked if goal compatibility influences the information seeking and information processing behavior of publics. To examine this question, the situational theory was tested across strategies, with the addition of goal compatibility as a predictor variable. Although significant positive correlations were found between goal

compatibility and information seeking across strategies, goal compatibility was not a predictor of information seeking behavior. Goal compatibility was found to be negatively correlated with information processing, but the correlations were not significant and goal compatibility did not function as a predictor of information processing behavior.

Despite these results, the analysis did find support for the predictions of the situational theory. Specifically, measures of problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement were found to be significant predictors of information seeking and information processing behavior across strategies. The strongest support for the theory was found in tests of information seeking for the informative strategy. Internal and external problem recognition and internal and external involvement were found to be positive predictors of information seeking, and the Beta weights were large. Internal constraint recognition was found to be a negative predictor of information seeking behavior, although the Beta weight was not as large for this variable.

Similar results were found for the other three strategies; however, the constraint recognition measures performed inconsistently. Specifically, the measure of internal constraint recognition, "The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it," was a significant negative predictor of information seeking for the informative and facilitative strategies, but it did not predict information seeking for the persuasive and cooperative problem solving strategies. In fact, none of the measures of constraint recognition predicted information seeking for the persuasive strategy. Furthermore, the measure of external constraint recognition, "The public could not solve the problem," was a positive predictor of information seeking for the cooperative problem solving strategy. This suggests that when cooperative problem solving strategies

are used, the public is perceived as unable to solve a problem and is actively communicating about it. This seems consistent with the definition of the cooperative problem solving strategy, which attempts to jointly define problems and solutions to problems through an open exchange of information.

Support was also found for the situational theory's predictions regarding information processing behavior. Specifically, the measure of internal constraint recognition was found to be a significant positive predictor of information processing across all of the strategies. This implies that, as constraint recognition in publics increased, publics are more likely to process information given to them but not seek it, regardless of the communication strategy used by the organization.

In addition, measures of involvement were found to be negative predictors of information processing behavior for the informative and facilitative strategies, although external involvement was a predictor for the informative strategy and internal involvement was a predictor for the facilitative strategy. This suggests that, for informative and facilitative strategies, publics perceived as uninvolved in a situation are also perceived as consuming information, but not actively seeking it.

Measures of problem recognition were found to be negative predictors of information processing behavior for the persuasive and cooperative problem solving strategies. The measure of external problem recognition, "The public recognized the existence of a problem," produced large negative Beta weights for both of these strategies. The internal measure of problem recognition, "The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better," also produced a large negative Beta weight for the persuasive strategy. This suggests that, for persuasive and cooperative problem solving

strategies, publics perceived as not recognizing a problem are also perceived as consuming information, but not actively seeking it.

These findings support the situational theory of publics and provide new information about the internal and external components of the independent variables. Specifically, in analyzing the findings related to the theory, internal and external measures of the independent variables appear to perform equally well in predicting information seeking and information processing behavior. The measures of constraint recognition are a possible exception to this generalization, since the measure of internal constraint recognition appears to perform better as a predictor of communication behavior. A review of the findings related to strategy use and effectiveness suggests a similar conclusion, although measures of internal problem recognition and internal involvement did not have a significant effect on strategy use.

An important caveat to this conclusion stems from the fact that the items used to measure the internal components of the variables do not actually measure the cognitions of the public. Rather, they measure practitioners' perceptions of the target public's cognitions. It is likely that the statements developed from definitions of the internal components were "easier" for practitioners to relate to because they were worded more appropriately for indirect measurement than the external items. For example, it was probably easier for practitioners to respond to the statement, "The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better," than to the statement, "The public thought the problem was serious." Generally, it is easier to discuss what another person "seemed like" than what they "thought."

Despite these limitations, the measures of the internal and external components of the variables performed comparably. Furthermore, the fact that the predictions of the situational theory held in spite of indirect measurement of the independent and dependent variables lends validity to the operationalization of the variables, as well as the findings of this study. It also serves to methodologically extend the theory.

It is also important to note that data analysis would have been less cumbersome if the three items used to measure each of the independent variables in the theory had been combined for hypothesis testing. However, this would have prevented in-depth analysis of the attributes of publics. Although the internal and external items measure the same constructs, they measure different components of the constructs. Thus, analysis of the individual items provided a more complete picture of the influence of each component on public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations.

Conclusions

This study posits the need for a positive theory of public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organization. Specifically, it asserts the need for a conceptualization of public relations behavior in organizations that links the message and receiver variables inherent in the public relations process. This research has attempted to contribute to the development of such a theory by examining how the attributes of problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement, and goal compatibility influence use of informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving strategies in organizations and the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving organizational goals.

The findings of this study support the conclusion that public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations is influenced by attributes of publics. In addition, the results provide new information about the attributes of publics most important to use and

effectiveness of each of the four strategies examined in this study. Thus, it is necessary to modify and extend the hypotheses Page and Hazleton proposed as the basis for a positive theory of public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations.

The hypotheses related to public relations strategy use reflect the findings of the doubly multivariate repeated measures ANOVA presented in Chapter 4. These statements reflect assumptions based on comparisons of the mean scores for attributes of publics across strategies. Since many of the comparisons in the analysis were not significant, the following hypotheses are posited as a basis for a positive theory that can be tested in future research (see Table 38):

- H1: Informative strategies are used when the public is perceived as having moderate problem recognition, moderate constraint recognition, moderate involvement, moderate goal compatibility, and information seeking behavior.
- H2: Facilitative strategies are used when the public is perceived as having low problem recognition, low constraint recognition, low involvement, high goal compatibility, and information processing behavior.
- H3: Persuasive strategies are used when the public is perceived as having low problem recognition, moderate constraint recognition, moderate involvement, low goal compatibility, and information processing behavior.
- H4: Cooperative problem solving strategies are used when the public is perceived as having high problem recognition, high constraint recognition, high involvement, high goal compatibility, and information seeking behavior.

Table 38: Relationship of attributes of publics and strategy use

Strategy Type	Problem Recognition	Constraint Recognition	Level of Involvement	Goal Compatibility	Info. Seeking
Informative	Moderate*	Moderate*	Moderate*	Moderate*	High**
Facilitative	Low*	Low**	Low*	High	Low
Persuasive	Low	Moderate**	Moderate*	Low	Low*
Cooperative Problem Solving	High	High**	High**	High	High

* Modified based on current findings. ** Added based on current findings.

The hypotheses related to strategy effectiveness reflect assumptions based on the findings of multiple regression analysis presented in Chapter 4. The following hypotheses are presented as the basis of a positive theory of public relations strategy effectiveness that can be tested in future research (see Table 39):

- H5: When publics exhibit moderate problem recognition, moderate involvement, and moderate goal compatibility, informative strategies will be effective.
- H6: When publics exhibit low problem recognition, low involvement, high goal compatibility, and are not actively seeking information, facilitative strategies will be effective.
- H7: When publics exhibit low problem recognition, moderate involvement, low constraint recognition, low goal compatibility, and are not actively seeking information, persuasive strategies will be effective.
- H8: When publics exhibit high problem recognition, high involvement, high goal compatibility, and are actively seeking information, cooperative problem solving strategies will be more effective.

Table 39: Relationship of attributes of publics and strategy effectiveness

Strategy Type	Problem Recognition	Constraint Recognition	Level of Involvement	Goal Compatibility	Info. Seeking
Informative	Moderate*		Moderate*	Moderate*	
Facilitative	Low**		Low**	High	Low
Persuasive	Low**	Low**	Moderate**	Low	Low**
Cooperative Problem Solving	High		High**	High	High**

* Modified based on current findings. ** Added based on current findings.

Limitations

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study suffers from several limitations. Of primary concern was the indirect method used to measure attributes of publics. This was considered appropriate for several reasons. First, the primary focus of this study was on

the message variable in the public relations process. It examined four message strategies commonly used by organizations to communicate with publics, and it sought to explain variance in the use and effectiveness of each strategy in relation to the others. Thus, it was necessary to examine the four strategies simultaneously. However, this could only be accomplished through indirect testing of the attributes of publics thought to contribute to variance in strategy use and effectiveness.

Although indirect measurement of attributes of publics does not provide the “true” cognitions and perceptions of publics, it does provide insight into the attributes of publics important to practitioners and organizations when making strategic communication decisions. Specifically, it contributes to our understanding of the effect an organization’s knowledge and perceptions of publics has on its communication strategies. In addition, it accounts for varying levels of knowledge and research among practitioners.

Another important limitation of this study stems from the methods used to gather data about the phenomena of interest. Specifically, direct mail and online modes of administration were used to survey public relations practitioners. As discussed in Chapter 3, Internet-based survey methods have many benefits. According to Couper (2000), the use of Internet-based surveys is increasing rapidly, mainly because researchers can access large numbers of respondents much quicker and at a much lower cost than with traditional administration methods. Dillman (2000) stated that electronic survey methods offer important efficiencies to the design and administration of self-administered questionnaires, including “nearly complete elimination of paper, postage, mailout, and data entry costs” (p. 352). In addition, response time is greatly reduced, and costs to add additional participant are much less than with traditional modes.

Despite these advantages, Internet-based surveys suffer from limitations related to coverage, sampling, measurement, and nonresponse error. The latter proved to be the most problematic for this study. Specifically, the overall response rate for the survey was 24.4%, which is considered low by academic standards. Qualitative feedback from practitioners provided insight into the reasons for nonresponse in this study.

A large number of practitioners refused to complete the survey because they felt the topic did not apply to the work they do. Many individuals sent email messages explaining the nature of their work and why they felt the study did not apply to them. Following are comments from several practitioners that illustrate the self-selection criteria used by practitioners:

I am actually not a PR practitioner. I work for Business Wire, so technically, I am a “vendor” of services for the PR industry. I work with PR practitioners at all levels, in both agencies and on the corporate side, but I am not qualified to participate in your research study.

—Account Executive, Business Wire

I started on the survey, but as the Marketing Specialist for a county museum that offers educational programs and exhibits, it quickly became apparent that the “problem” emphasis was not applicable.

—Marketing Specialist

I am now involved more in marketing than in public relations and we are such a small organization, pretty much everything is off the cuff. Looking at your survey, I don't think I could contribute anything to it.

—Manager, Marketing Communications, Inc.

I work for a nonprofit, state association that primarily focuses on members. I would say that no more than 2 percent of what I do is actually working with the “public.” Add to the fact that this position is not really your standard public relations position ... I don't think I've ever actually used any of the strategies you asked about.

—Director of Communications, Iowa Association of Realtors

Although I am still a member of PRSA, I actually do marketing for my organization and have been for 4 1/2 years. I read through your questions and do not feel my position would best answer the information requested.

–Unidentified Practitioner

I have attempted to complete the questionnaire you sent, and while I *would* like very much “to contribute to my profession” of these past 40 or so years, I cannot do so through your survey. Unfortunately, Corporate IEEE does not utilize the types of communications programs that would lend themselves to answering your survey in a manner that would provide you with accurate information. Due to budget constraints and other priorities, our media relations programs are geared to responding to journalists’ information requests – not to communicating a particular message, goal, etc. I am sorry, but I cannot help you.

–Media Relations Specialist, IEEE

I’m a CEO of an ambulance service in Michigan. Typically, we are responsible for educating/communicating [to] the public about emergency related topics, etc. However, because our business is only 1.5 years old, we have not engaged in any type of strategy thus far. I don’t think the survey will apply to our business.

–CEO, Ambulance service

Many practitioners refused to complete the online instrument because they felt it was too long, too time-consuming, confusing, or the electronic format was difficult to follow. Following are comments from practitioners citing their reasons for declining to respond:

I was going to take your online survey the other day but honestly the flow and format were confusing and hard to follow.

–Counselor, Jackson, Jackson & Wagner

I usually don’t mind participating in studies for students but this one is way too long and frankly, the questions and responses so evident I can’t imagine how it could be useful.

–Executive Vice President/General Manager, Hill & Knowlton

I looked at your study and found it was too time consuming for most people who are busy full-time practitioners.

–APR, Marketing Counselor, Pace & Partners

I started to fill out your survey, but I have to tell you, it was excruciating. I could not finish it. It was hard to complete, the format was cumbersome, and the content seemed to be essentially the same questions for each section, over and over again. I wanted to help, but the design of the instrument just sent me over the edge. I had to quit.

—Director of Public Relations, The Communications Group

I found [the survey] less than easy to complete. It is a bit much to hold the issue and answer over 10 questions about it when you can't explain it.

—Unidentified Practitioner

I have visited the site twice, thinking I would complete it, but the survey is simply too lengthy and requires too much thought on my part. I don't mean to sound ignorant—but in the middle of my crammed day, I am already balancing the needs of approximately six clients, and I cannot take the time needed to appropriately answer the survey questions.

—Account Director, Borshoff Johnson & Company

The page was too wide for me to conveniently keep track of what question I was answering and to fully read the question, I had to arrow back and forth from side to side and then carefully follow along with my eyes to the circle I wished to check. Given the fact that the lines were so wide and the number of questions so vast, it was easy to get lost regularly during the process. Basically, it was just plain irritating to have such difficulty with the physical aspect of the project.

*—APR, Senior Public Relations Account Executive,
Associated Advertising Agency*

Several practitioners stated that they had technical problems with the survey Web site.

Following are comments related to these problems:

The page for this survey wouldn't open.

—Communication Manager, Fox Sports Net Chicago

I filled out the survey and tried to submit it, but I'm not sure it made it. When I tried to close it out, I got an error message saying that Netscape was unable to locate the server.

*—Marketing Manager, North Carolina Department of
Transportation-Rail Division*

I completed your survey only to discover a message that said “server cannot be found.” Is there a problem with the “close” button page?

–Executive Director, Homestead Communications

The Web site for your survey wasn't responding when I tried to help with your survey.

*–Manager, Corporate Public Information,
Northrop Grumman Corporation*

Unfortunately, the initial request for participation for the Sample 1 online survey was sent to practitioners on Mon., September 10, the day before the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centers. During the days following the attack, several practitioners replied to the initial request and reminder notices citing the attack as their reason for not responding. Ultimately, this led to the decision to halt data collection for Sample 1.

Following are some of these comments:

I appreciate your need to work on your doctorate. Keep in mind that some of us have loved ones lost in the WTC incident and your survey is about the LAST thing I currently have time for. I will get to it when I can...but there are many other things that take precedence at the moment.

–Unidentified Practitioner

Right now, those of us in New York City are under rather a heavy burden. I received your last communication the week after the terrorist attack in NYC that killed a number of my clients, friends and acquaintances. I thought it was poorly timed, to say the least. Unfortunately, I do not have time right now to help you with your project. I would appreciate it if you would take me off of your list, but wish you success with it.

–President, Temin & Company, Inc.

Unfortunately, I do not have the time to participate in this survey. As every sentient being on the planet knows, New York City is dealing with a horrific crisis, and my office is located in downtown Manhattan. I wish you the best of luck in your research and with your studies.

–Vice President, Director - Corporate Communication

My regrets, but we are extremely busy as a result of last week's events and I cannot respond.

—APR, Corporate & Marketing Communications Manager

I cannot contribute to your survey at this time. I work for the NJ Office of Emergency Mgmt. and must support the response to NYC incident.

—Training/Outreach Specialist

Obviously, the richness of qualitative feedback offered by Internet-based surveys is an important advantage not addressed in the literature. In addition to comments related to the survey design and construction, a wealth of information was gathered from respondents about their reactions to the content of the questionnaire. Following are some of the messages offering feedback concerning the topic and content of the questionnaire:

The problem I had with your research design is that it assumes one picks a strategy and 'rides that horse for the entire race.' I not only pick and choose from among strategies, I sometimes combine or change strategies while in the midst of problems. I realize such actions make messy research, but they describe the real world.

—Unidentified Practitioner

I tried to answer the questions, but my current practice involves mostly marketing communications, so the answers come out simplistic. We don't do "PR" but rather do publicity. The questions seem geared to issues management. I believe it may be a mistake on your part to assume an issues management environment for communications strategies. There are so many other scenarios as well.

—President, SJK Communications, Inc.

I did complete your survey though you won't get much real-world information from it. It was far too academic to give you an accurate picture of the industry you're trying to study. The questions seemed to be written in a way that you had a problem or industry in mind when you crafted them even though public relations serves all sectors of the economy in a myriad of situations. They were also aggressively redundant. While there is a need for controls, the controls probably shouldn't be so extensive or transparent

—APR, Maryland Public Television

I returned to the quiz today to see if I found it any easier to complete than the first time I visited. I did not. As a PR firm, there is some difficulty in completing the survey but I tried to select one example and complete it from there. However, I then ran into problems responding to some of the questions which seemed irrelevant to the example I selected. For example under persuasive, I chose a brochure used to promote and sell condominiums. I have a hard time agreeing or disagreeing at any level with the question, "When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for the public." Even if I assume you mean targeted public (which is not how your survey reads), I still find it hard to gauge the brochure's outcome as favorable or unfavorable to them. I don't mean to be critical or thick-skulled, but I could not rationalize answers. Hence, I elected to only complete the data portion of the survey.

—President/Owner, David Clark Public Relations

I am a consultant and work with a handful of clients, mostly on an ongoing basis. While I might employ an education-type approach as a strategy or tactic with my clients, frankly, it just isn't to the degree that you appear to research. I don't want to come across as cynical, but rarely do I work with an organization - large or small - that is willing to invest in the spectrum of elements that encompasses a well-orchestrated approach like the one you're surveying. Full-scale, highly funded programs (which appear to be the focus of your research) are the purview of a relatively narrow group of companies that appreciate the value of PR. I've been practicing public relations and marketing for 17 years and, for example, today I spent two hours with a \$10-30 million company that refers to media relations as "free publicity." Then I review your survey and shake my head. I'd volunteer that you may not get your statistically viable sample, not because we're a bunch of callous jerk-practitioners, but instead because we won't take time to admit that our clients/employers are too unsophisticated in this arena to appreciate/value/invest in these types of programs. What the PR/marketing profession needs is a HUGE initiative that articulates its worth. My APR (accreditation) is meaningless, in that NEVER IN MY ENTIRE CONSULTING CAREER HAS ONE CLIENT KNOWN WHAT IT MEANS. We all know what a CPA is - can't APR strive for that level of awareness/acknowledgement? It's frustrating to work in a field that is sometimes unappreciated (that's what I call myself a MARKETING AND PR CONSULTANT—marketing is mentioned first, by design). Nonetheless, I absolutely love my work and enjoy fighting the good fight.

—APR, Marketing & PR Consultant

Answering this survey was very difficult since the taxonomy seems to me to be very artificial. We usually assume that what we're doing is in the public interest and that we're simply providing objective facts which will

allow the public involved (we never, nor do most others, appeal to the general public) to see the mutuality of our interests.

—Unidentified Practitioner

I completed your survey, but I question the value of the results you'll get. My concern is that the survey asks respondents to think of a time they have used each type of strategy and then respond to questions based on that experience. However, in my 25 years in public relations, I have found no consistency in the effectiveness of any "generic" strategy. Every PR situation is different. For example, one time the collaborative approach works beautifully, but in another situation it fails miserably. In answering each set of questions, I found myself thinking that if I had chosen to base my answers on a different PR project or situation, the answers would have been totally different! Also, most projects involve using a "blend" of strategies—not just one. Finally, many questions refer to the "public," but there is no such thing. In most situations there are many different "publics," all with different interests and goals. Therefore, the impact of any PR strategy tends to differ with each distinct group you're trying to reach

—Supervisor, Corporate Communications, Ameren Services

I work for an agency, not a corporation, so we see a lot of cases with different circumstances and outcomes—and, therefore, different strategies. Frankly, the patterns are not really very clear, which is why this is a practice or maybe even an art, with rules that seem to be, well, ambiguous. What's more, I work mostly around investor relations and transactions and crises situations for the firm of Abernathy MacGregor, and the issues we face are simply different from those raised by the survey.

—Lucas Corporate PR & Investor Relations

Some of the questions seem too broad to me in speaking about "the public," with the assumption that its members think alike and share common goals. I think it's not so simple to assess "the goals of the public" and whether "the public" got what it wanted. There are a variety of publics, whose members have different goals. There is no question that there are, as your survey states, different approaches to public relations; but I'm not sure that the nuances of various publics are reflected well in some of the questions, especially about the goals of the public.

*—Senior Media Relations Representative,
College of Letters and Science, UCLA*

Finally, several message were received from respondent regarding the contact procedures used. Specifically, several practitioners wrote to express their appreciation for the prenotification. These responses indicate that the prenotification likely had a positive impact on the response rate. In addition, several practitioners sent messages expressing their frustration with reminder notices. These messages were from practitioners in the second sample, which received three follow-up reminders. Following are comments related to the contact procedures used in this study:

This is the nicest advance notice I've ever received. Usually these things just appear and the deadline is never convenient.

—President, Hamilton Public Relations

Good idea to alert in advance. I'll help as much as I can.

—Unidentified Practitioner

I appreciate your advance notice. You should know that without this advance email, I would have been unlikely to answer the questionnaire!

—Public Relations Specialist, Go America

One way you can contribute to your profession is to eliminate the names of those who have completed your survey from future mailings. I did complete the survey. I would appreciate not getting more spam.

—Corporate Communication Manager, 3M Industrial Markets

I completed your survey at the first opportunity. Now, please quit sending me email. And, next time you do a survey, please consider tracking participation.

—Ryan Hanser, Hanser & Associates

This is now the third or fourth e-mail (some less generous might call it spam) that I've received from you. One reminder is OK, but this is pushing it. Please stop sending the reminders!

*—Senior Communication Associate,
American Society of Internal Medicine*

These comments reflect the limitation of using Internet-based survey methods; however, they also illustrate the opportunities online methods present for gathering meaningful qualitative information about the phenomena under investigation. The detailed feedback gained through email is uncommon in other modes of survey administration. In addition, the quantity and variety of responses from practitioners provide useful information for future research.

Significance

Public relations is an applied discipline; therefore, the theoretical concepts posited by scholars must find relevance in practice to be meaningful. This fact is clearly articulated by practitioners who provided qualitative information regarding the questionnaire content. The significance of this study lies in its ability to contribute to public relations theory, practice, and pedagogy by positing a framework for public relations strategy use in organizations.

This study is significant to public relations theory because it advances understanding of the public relations behavior of organizations. Public relations scholars seek to develop a better understanding of public relations phenomena in the hopes of arriving at ways of predicting outcomes. Hazleton and Long's Public Relations Process Model is used as the theoretical framework for this study because it describes public relations as goal-driven strategic communication influenced by the situational interaction of source, message, and receiver variables. By using this model as a foundation for empirical investigation, researchers are able to identify and study a fuller, more inclusive range of variables thought to influence the public relations process. Therefore, this model brings scholars closer to a true depiction of the public relations behavior of organizations. This study provides further validation for the model and its accompanying taxonomy of public

relations strategies. In this way, it contributes to the theoretical and practical advancement of public relations.

A second important contribution of this study is the usefulness of its findings in practice. Public relations practitioners require proven tools and techniques they can use to help organizations communicate more effectively with publics who affect and are affected by organizational behavior. It is clear that organizations use a variety of public relations strategies when communicating with publics. It is also clear that public relations strategy selection is not a random activity. In fact, strategies are defined as being both purposive and managed (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000). Therefore, organizations need a practical framework for the development and implementation of strategic communication that is effective in achieving organizational goals in specific situations. This study seeks to provide such a framework. In addition, practitioners and organizations require a collective way of talking about public relations activity. The taxonomy of public relations strategies identified by Hazleton and tested in this study offers a universal way of discussing public relations activity.

Finally, this study seeks to contribute to public relations pedagogy by providing an integrative device for understanding the public relations process in organizations and by providing an instructional framework for understanding the types of message strategies that are most effective with different types of publics. According to Hazleton & Long (1988), most public relations textbooks offer students “a compendiums of lists, rather than holistic, interdisciplinary descriptions of the public relations process” (p. 86). In addition, many textbooks fail to emphasize commonalities across all public relations endeavors. As a result, students are not offered an integrated device for understanding

their education. Furthermore, Hallahan (2000a) noted the lack of educational material related to message strategy. “At best, introductory public relations texts provide generalized reviews of communication theory. Meanwhile, writing textbooks offer few insights to beginning writers about how to write effectively for different publics” (p. 464). The findings of this study provide a foundation for understanding message strategy that is useful to public relations educators.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides a foundation for the development of a positive theory of public relations strategy use in organizations that links the message and receiver variables inherent in the public relations process. Future research should focus on further development of this theory through analysis of public relations strategies and attributes of publics as they relate to effectiveness in achieving organizational goals. Specifically, more research is needed that views public relations for a communication-centered perspective in order to advance understanding of the interaction between source, message, and receiver variables in the public relations process.

Future research should examine public relations strategies in greater detail. This study examined only four of the seven message strategies identified in Hazleton’s taxonomy. Studies must be undertaken that explore less frequently used strategies to determine their appropriateness and effectiveness in achieving organizational goals. In addition, future research should seek to identify other strategic communication approaches used by organizations and the attributes of publics most significant to their use and effectiveness.

The finding that gender and organization type influence strategy use should be investigated in detail. Feminist research in public relations indicates the women are more likely to embrace strategies characterized by cooperation, collaboration, and relationship

building. Research is needed that explores the underlying perceptions and values that guide women in their strategic communication choices, and how these choices contribute to effectiveness in achieving organizational goals.

The influence of organization type on public relations strategy use also deserves attention. This study found that organizations dedicated to health and welfare use facilitation more often than other types of organizations. The reasons for this finding should be explored. Furthermore, the influence of other organizational demographic variables on public relations strategy use and effectiveness must be examined.

Future research should undertake in-depth analysis of the attributes of publics relevant to public relations strategy use and effectiveness in organizations. Public relations scholars have issued a call for more theory and research dedicated to understanding publics. This study makes a nominal contribution to that objective; however, it examined only a few of the attributes of publics thought to influence communication between organizations and their target publics. More attention must be devoted to understanding the unique characteristics that guide publics in their interaction with organizations and how these characteristics impact the public relations behavior of organizations. Future studies should also seek to identify other attributes of publics that are significant to strategy use and effectiveness. Of particular interest are variables related to power, motivation, and the knowledge/attitude/behavior change process.

Furthermore, the results of this study found the attribute of goal compatibility to be the primary contributor to unique variance in effectiveness for all of the strategies tested. Thus, it can be argued that goal compatibility functions as the primary predictor of public relations strategy effectiveness. As such, this variable becomes even more important

when organizations have a limited capacity to evaluate multiple attributes of publics. However, the concept of goal compatibility and its importance to public relations must be further explicated. Specifically, research should be undertaken to determine how the goals of publics interact with the goals of organizations to produce mutually beneficial relationships and effective outcomes for both the organization and the public.

Finally, research should be undertaken that examines strategy use and effectiveness from other methodological perspectives. Specifically, future research must incorporate qualitative research techniques. While survey methods are important for general understanding of strategy use and effectiveness in organizations, they do provide understanding of why organizations communicate as they do, or why certain attributes of publics influence strategy use and effectiveness, and others do not.

The need for qualitative research was articulated by several public relations practitioners in email messages presented earlier in this chapter. Practitioners expressed a desire to explain the instances when they used specific strategies, and to give details about the forces that guide strategy selection in their organization. Qualitative analysis may provide a fuller, more complete explanation of how and why organizations use public relations strategies, as well as the factors that influence strategy use and effectiveness.

The aim of this study was to provide a foundation on which to build understanding of message and receiver variables in the public relations process, and to advance a framework for investigating the relationship between the two. Future research must attempt to further the development of discipline-specific public relations theory by building on the limited understanding achieved here.

APPENDIX A
DIRECT MAIL SURVEY PACKAGE

Prenotification Letter

July 10, 2001

«First_Name» «Last_name»
«PositionTitle»
«Organization»
«Address»
«City», «St» «Zip_Code»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_name»;

A few days from now, you will receive in the mail a request to fill out a brief questionnaire for an important research project being conducted by a doctoral student at the University of Florida.

The questionnaire concerns the practice of public relations. Specifically, it investigates how organizations communicate and the types of publics (audiences) they communicate with.

I am writing in advance because many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. The study is an important one that will help public relations researchers and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies do not work will help us in our efforts to teach others.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the generous help of people like you that this research can be successful.

Sincerely,

Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate

Request for Participation Letter

July 14, 2001

«First_Name» «Last_name», «PositionTitle»
«Organization»
«Address»
«City», «State» «Zip»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_name»;

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida and a member of the Public Relations Society of America. I am writing to ask for your help in research that investigates how the characteristics of target publics (audiences) influence the use of communication strategies in organizations.

As a member of PRSA, you are part of a carefully selected sample of public relations practitioners who have been asked to assist with this survey. This study is an important one that will help public relations researchers and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies do not work will help in our efforts to teach others.

The enclosed questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete, and your responses will remain completely confidential. Your name will never be connected to your responses in any way. Please read the informed consent statement below for information on your rights as a participant in this study.

Your input is vital to this study. Scholarly research increases the professionalism of public relations and adds to its credibility as a behavioral science. Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire and returning it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thank you, in advance, for helping with this important study.

Sincerely,

Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Reminder Postcard

July 20, 2001

Last week a questionnaire seeking your input about the practice of public relations was mailed to you. You were selected as part of a carefully chosen sample of public relations practitioners who are members of PRSA.

If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, please accept my sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. I am especially grateful for your help because it is only by asking practitioners like you to share your experiences that we can understand why organizations communicate the way they do.

If you did not receive a questionnaire, or if it was misplaced, please contact me at (352) 284-5496 or email kgpage@ufl.edu and I will send you a another one.

Kelly G. Page, Doctoral Candidate
College of Journalism & Communications, University of Florida

Questionnaire**PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY USE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Thank you for helping with this study about the practice of public relations.

Understanding how organizations communicate and the types of publics (audiences) they communicate with will help us understand what works, what does not work, and why.

Instructions: On the following pages, four communication strategies are described that your organization may have used: informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving. Following the description of each strategy, you are asked to rate how often the strategy is used by your organization by checking the appropriate space on the scale provided. Next, you will be asked to recall a specific instance in which your organization used the strategy and respond to statements about the target public your message was directed to. If you work for a public relations firm or advertising agency, please recall a specific client you worked for and the client's target public. Finally, you are asked to provide demographic information about you and your organization. Please answer as candidly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.

Thank you for participating in this research!

INFORMATIVE/EDUCATION STRATEGY

An informative/education strategy is based on the presentation of unbiased facts. Informative messages do not draw conclusions but presume that the target public will infer appropriate conclusions from accurate data. Informative messages may suggest a variety of alternative solutions to problems and are characterized by the use of neutral language.

My organization
has frequently used
this strategy. _____

My organization
has never used this
strategy. _____

Now please remember a specific instance when your organization used this strategy and respond to statements about the target public using the scale below. If you work for a public relations agency, recall a specific client that used this strategy and the client's target public. If your organization has never used this strategy, go to the next strategy description.

7 = Strongly Agree 6 = Agree 5 = Slightly Agree 4 = Undecided 3 = Slightly Disagree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

- _____ 1. My organization and the public had different goals.
- _____ 2. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for my organization.
- _____ 3. The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.
- _____ 4. The public recognized the existence of a problem.
- _____ 5. The public was actively seeking information about the situation.
- _____ 6. The public wanted the same thing my organization wanted.
- _____ 7. The public could not solve the problem.
- _____ 8. Members of the public sought information from my organization about the situation.
- _____ 9. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for the public.
- _____ 10. The members of the public consumed information given to them, but did not actively seek it.
- _____ 11. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of my organization.
- _____ 12. There were constraints, or obstacles, that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.
- _____ 13. The public got what it wanted when this strategy was used.
- _____ 14. The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization.
- _____ 15. The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.
- _____ 16. The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.
- _____ 17. The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.
- _____ 18. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of the public.
- _____ 19. The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.
- _____ 20. The public was highly involved in the situation.
- _____ 21. The public thought the situation was serious.
- _____ 22. My organization got what it wanted when this strategy was used.

FACILITATIVE STRATEGY

A facilitative strategy is accomplished by making resources available to members of a public that allow them to act in ways that they are already predisposed to act. Resources may be tangible artifacts, such as tools or money (i.e. a postage paid return envelope), or they may be directions which tell someone how to accomplish a particular action (i.e. a directional billboard).

My organization
has frequently used
this strategy.

My organization
has never used this
strategy.

Now please remember a specific instance when your organization used this strategy and respond to statements about the target public using the scale below. If you work for a public relations agency, recall a specific client that used this strategy and the client's target public. If your organization has never used this strategy, go to the next strategy description.

7 = Strongly Agree 6 = Agree 5 = Slightly Agree 4 = Undecided 3 = Slightly Disagree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

- _____ 1. My organization and the public had different goals.
- _____ 2. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for my organization.
- _____ 3. The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.
- _____ 4. The public recognized the existence of a problem.
- _____ 5. The public was actively seeking information about the situation.
- _____ 6. The public wanted the same thing my organization wanted.
- _____ 7. The public could not solve the problem.
- _____ 8. Members of the public sought information from my organization about the situation.
- _____ 9. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for the public.
- _____ 10. The members of the public consumed information given to them, but did not actively seek it.
- _____ 11. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of my organization.
- _____ 12. There were constraints, or obstacles, that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.
- _____ 13. The public got what it wanted when this strategy was used.
- _____ 14. The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization.
- _____ 15. The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.
- _____ 16. The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.
- _____ 17. The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.
- _____ 18. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of the public.
- _____ 19. The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.
- _____ 20. The public was highly involved in the situation.
- _____ 21. The public thought the situation was serious.
- _____ 22. My organization got what it wanted when this strategy was used.

PERSUASIVE STRATEGY

Persuasive strategies are characterized by appeals to a public's values or emotions. These messages may include a selective presentation of information and use language which is not neutral. They reflect the importance of the issue to the organization and the involvement of the organization in the situation. Persuasive messages provide a call for action, either directly or indirectly.

My organization
has frequently used
this strategy.

My organization
has never used this
strategy.

Now please remember a specific instance when your organization used this strategy and respond to statements about the target public using the scale below. If you work for a public relations agency, recall a specific client that used this strategy and the client's target public. If your organization has never used this strategy, go to the next strategy description.

7 = Strongly Agree 6 = Agree 5 = Slightly Agree 4 = Undecided 3 = Slightly Disagree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

- _____ 1. My organization and the public had different goals.
- _____ 2. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for my organization.
- _____ 3. The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.
- _____ 4. The public recognized the existence of a problem.
- _____ 5. The public was actively seeking information about the situation.
- _____ 6. The public wanted the same thing my organization wanted.
- _____ 7. The public could not solve the problem.
- _____ 8. Members of the public sought information from my organization about the situation.
- _____ 9. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for the public.
- _____ 10. The members of the public consumed information given to them, but did not actively seek it.
- _____ 11. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of my organization.
- _____ 12. There were constraints, or obstacles, that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.
- _____ 13. The public got what it wanted when this strategy was used.
- _____ 14. The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization.
- _____ 15. The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.
- _____ 16. The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.
- _____ 17. The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.
- _____ 18. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of the public.
- _____ 19. The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.
- _____ 20. The public was highly involved in the situation.
- _____ 21. The public thought the situation was serious.
- _____ 22. My organization got what it wanted when this strategy was used.

COOPERATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGY

Cooperative problem solving messages reflect a willingness to jointly define problems and solutions to problems. These messages are characterized by an open exchange of information to establish common goals and to share responsibilities about the situation. These messages create a sense of interdependence between an organization and its public and use inclusive language, such as "we."

My organization
has frequently used
this strategy.

My organization
has never used this
strategy.

Now please remember a specific instance when your organization used this strategy and respond to statements about the target public using the scale below. If you work for a public relations agency, recall a specific client that used this strategy and the client's target public. If your organization has never used this strategy, go to the next strategy description.

7 = Strongly Agree 6 = Agree 5 = Slightly Agree 4 = Undecided 3 = Slightly Disagree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

- _____ 1. My organization and the public had different goals.
- _____ 2. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for my organization.
- _____ 3. The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.
- _____ 4. The public recognized the existence of a problem.
- _____ 5. The public was actively seeking information about the situation.
- _____ 6. The public wanted the same thing my organization wanted.
- _____ 7. The public could not solve the problem.
- _____ 8. Members of the public sought information from my organization about the situation.
- _____ 9. When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for the public.
- _____ 10. The members of the public consumed information given to them, but did not actively seek it.
- _____ 11. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of my organization.
- _____ 12. There were constraints, or obstacles, that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.
- _____ 13. The public got what it wanted when this strategy was used.
- _____ 14. The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization.
- _____ 15. The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.
- _____ 16. The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.
- _____ 17. The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.
- _____ 18. This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of the public.
- _____ 19. The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.
- _____ 20. The public was highly involved in the situation.
- _____ 21. The public thought the situation was serious.
- _____ 22. My organization got what it wanted when this strategy was used.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Listed below are a few demographic questions about you and your organization that will help us understand your answers. Please answer these questions to the best of your knowledge.

1. Gender: _____ Female _____ Male
2. Accredited in public relations: _____ Yes _____ No
3. Tenure in current position: _____ years
4. Total years of experience in public relations: _____
5. Which category best describes your current position? (circle one)
 - a. Entry level / Technician
 - b. Specialist / Coordinator / Assistant / Junior
 - c. Supervisory / Director / Manager
 - d. Senior Manager
 - e. Other
6. Which category best describes your current salary level?
 - a. \$15,000 - \$25,000
 - b. \$25,001 - \$39,000
 - c. \$39,001 - \$55,000
 - d. \$55,001 - \$76,000
 - e. \$76,001 and above
 - f. Other
7. Which category best describes your highest level of education completed? (circle one)
 - a. MBA
 - b. Other Graduate Degree
 - c. Undergraduate Degree
 - d. Incomplete Undergraduate Study
 - e. High School Diploma
8. Which category best describes your organization sector?

a. Public Relations Firm/Advertising Agency b. Corporation c. Government d. Association	h. Educational Institution i. Not-for-profit j. Health & Welfare k. Other
--	--

Thank you for participating in this survey!

APPENDIX B
ONLINE SURVEY PACKAGE

Sample 1: Prenotification Message

Subject: Public Relations Research
Date: Wednesday, September 5, 2001 7:08am
From: Kelly G. Page <kgpage@ufl.edu>
To: <email_address>

«First_Name» «Last_Name»,
«PositionTitle»
«Organization»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_Name»;

Early next week, you will receive an email message requesting that you complete a brief online questionnaire for an important research project being conducted by a doctoral student at the University of Florida.

The questionnaire concerns the practice of public relations. Specifically, it investigates how organizations communicate and the types of publics (audiences) they communicate with.

I am writing in advance because many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. The study is an important one that will help public relations scholars and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies do not work will help us in our efforts to teach others.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the help of generous people like you that this research can be successful.

Sincerely,
Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Sample 1: Request for Participation Message

Subject: Public Relations Research -- Questionnaire
Date: Monday, September 10, 2001 7:32 am
From: Kelly G. Page <kgpage@ufl.edu>
To: <email_address>

«First_Name» «Last_Name»,
«PositionTitle»
«Organization»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_Name»;

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida and a member of the Public Relations Society of America. I am writing to ask for your help in research that investigates the practice of public relations.

As a member of the PRSA, you are part of a carefully selected sample of public relations practitioners who have been asked to assist with this survey. This study is an important one that will help public relations researchers and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies do not work will help in our efforts to teach others.

The questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete, and your responses will remain completely confidential. Your name will never be connected to your responses in any way. Please read the informed consent statement below for information on your rights as a participant in this study.

Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey/>

Sincerely,
Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Sample 1: Reminder Notice 1

Subject: Please contribute to your profession
Date: Monday, September 17, 2001 8:44 am
From: Kelly G. Page <kgpage@ufl.edu>
To: <email_address>

«First_Name» «Last_Name»,
«PositionTitle»
«Organization»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_Name»;

Recently, I asked you to participate in research about the practice of public relations. As a practitioner, you are the most knowledgeable source of information about how public relations concepts are applied in the real world.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida, a faculty member at the University of South Florida and a member of PRSA. I am trying to gain a better understanding of the communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what works and what doesn't work will help in our efforts to teach others.

The informed consent statement below explains your rights as a participant in this study. Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey/>

Many thanks to those of you who have already completed the questionnaire.

Sincerely,
Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Sample 1: Reminder Notice 2

Subject: Please contribute to your profession
Date: Monday, September 24, 2001 10:31 am
From: Kelly G. Page <kgpage@ufl.edu>
To: <email_address>

«First_Name» «Last_Name»,
«PositionTitle»
«Organization»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_Name»;

Recently, you were asked to participate in research about the practice of public relations. As a practitioner, you are the most knowledgeable source of information about how public relations concepts are applied in the real world.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida, a faculty member at the University of South Florida and a member of PRSA. I am trying to gain a better understanding of the communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what works and what doesn't work will help in our efforts to teach others.

The informed consent statement below explains your rights as a participant in this study. Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey/>

Many thanks to those of you who have already completed the questionnaire.

Sincerely,
Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Sample 2: Prenotification Message

Subject: Public Relations Research
Date: Monday, February 25, 2002 7:19am
From: Kelly G. Page <kgpage@ufl.edu>
To: <email_address>

«First_Name» «Last_Name»,
«PositionTitle»
«Organization»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_Name»;

Later this week, you will receive an email message asking you to complete an online questionnaire for an important research project about the practice of public relations. As a public relations practitioner, you are the most knowledgeable source of information about how public relations concepts are applied in the real world.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida and a member of PRSA. In addition, I am a full-time instructor in the School of Mass Communications at the University of South Florida, where I teach public relations courses and serve as the faculty advisor for the USF chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America.

I am writing in advance because many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. The study is an important one that will help public relations scholars and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies don't work will help us in our efforts to teach others.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the generous help of people like you that this research can be successful.

Sincerely,
Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Sample 2: Request for Participation Message

Subject: Public Relations Research
 Date: Friday, March 1, 2002 4:47 am
 From: Kelly G. Page <kgpage@ufl.edu>
 To: <email_address>

«First_Name» «Last_Name»,
 «PositionTitle»
 «Organization»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_Name»;

I am writing to ask for your help in research that investigates the practice of public relations. As a member of the Public Relations Society of America, you are part of a carefully selected sample of public relations practitioners who have been asked to complete an online questionnaire about the communication strategies you use.

The questionnaire is housed on a Web site at the University of Florida and can be accessed by clicking the link below. It will take about 15 minutes to complete, and your responses will remain completely confidential-neither your name nor your email address will be connected to your responses in any way. Please read the informed consent statement below for information on your rights as a participant in this study.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida and a member of PRSA. In addition, I am a full-time instructor in the School of Mass Communications at the University of South Florida, where I teach public relations courses and serve as the faculty advisor for the USF chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America.

This study is an important one that will help public relations researchers and practitioners understand the types of communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what strategies work and what strategies don't work will help in our efforts to teach others. Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey/>

If you would like to obtain a summary of the results of this study, please reply to this message at your convenience. Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,
 Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Sample 2: Reminder Notice 1

Subject: Please share your knowledge
Date: Thursday, March 7, 2002 2:09 am
From: Kelly G. Page <kgpage@ufl.edu>
To: <email_address>

«First_Name» «Last_Name»,
«PositionTitle»
«Organization»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_Name»;

Recently, you were asked to participate in research about the practice of public relations. As a practitioner, you are the most knowledgeable source of information about how public relations concepts are applied in the real world. You can help others understand what public relations is and how it works.

Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey/>

Many thanks to those who have completed the questionnaire.

Sincerely,
Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Sample 2: Reminder Notice 2

Subject: Please help with important study
 Date: Wednesday, March 13, 2002 1:24 am
 From: Kelly G. Page <kgpage@ufl.edu>
 To: <email_address>

«First_Name» «Last_Name»,
 «PositionTitle»
 «Organization»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_Name»;

Recently, you were asked to participate in research about the practice of public relations. As a practitioner, you are the most knowledgeable source of information about how public relations concepts are applied in the real world.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Florida, a faculty member at the University of South Florida and a member of PRSA. I am trying to gain a better understanding of the communication strategies that are most effective with certain target groups. In addition, understanding what works and what doesn't work will help in our efforts to teach others.

The informed consent statement below explains your rights as a participant in this study. Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey/>

Many thanks to those who have already completed the questionnaire.

Sincerely,
 Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate
 University of Florida

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Sample 2: Reminder Notice 3

Subject: Final Reminder
Date: Wednesday, March 20, 2002 3:07pm
From: Kelly G. Page <kgpage@ufl.edu>
To: <email_address>

«First_Name» «Last_Name»,
«PositionTitle»
«Organization»

Dear «First_Name» «Last_Name»;

Recently, you were asked to participate in an online survey about public relations. I really need your help to complete this research. I only need a few more responses for my results to be statistically representative of the PRSA population.

This is the final reminder you will receive. Won't you please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/prsurvey/>

Many thanks to those who have already completed the questionnaire.

Sincerely,
Kelly Garnette Page, Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida

Informed consent statement: This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hon, 2016 Weimer Hall, University of Florida, Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400; (352) 392-6522. Your responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this research and you will receive no compensation for your participation. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact me at e-mail address kgpage@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Online Survey Instrument**How do organizations communicate and who are they communicating with?**

Thank you for helping with this survey about the practice of public relations. Understanding how organizations communicate and the types of publics (audiences) they communicate with will help us understand what works, what doesn't work and why.

You are part of a carefully selected sample that has been asked to assist with this survey, and we appreciate your participation. Your responses to the questionnaire will remain completely confidential. If you have any difficulties in responding, please send e-mail to kpage@ufl.edu or call (352) 284-5496.

Thank you for your help!





Instructions

In the following questionnaire, four communication strategies are described that the organization you currently work for may have used: informative, facilitative, persuasive, and cooperative problem solving. Following the description of each strategy, we will ask how often this strategy is used by your organization. Please use your mouse to click the box that best represents the frequency with which the strategy is used. Next, you will be asked to recall a specific instance in which you used the strategy and the characteristics of the target public your message was directed to. Please answer as candidly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.



Persuasive Strategy

Persuasive strategies are characterized by appeals to a public's values or emotions. They may include a selective presentation of information. They may use language which is not neutral, language which reflects the importance of the issue and the involvement of the organization in the situation. Persuasive messages provide a call for action, either directly or indirectly.

My organization has frequently used this strategy.

○

○

○

○

○

○

○

○

My organization has never used this strategy.

Now please remember a specific instance when your organization used this strategy and respond to statements about the target public using the scale provided. If you work for a public relations firm or advertising agency, recall a specific client that used this strategy and the client's target public. If your organization has never used this strategy, go to the next strategy description.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Undecided	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 My organization and the public had different goals.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2 When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for my organization.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
3 The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4 The public recognized the existence of a problem.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
5 The public was actively seeking information about the situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6 The public wanted the same thing my organization wanted.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
7 The public could not solve the problem.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8 Members of the public sought information from my organization about the situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
9 When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for the public.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
10 The members of the public consumed information given to them, but did not actively seek it.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
11 This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of my organization.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12 There were constraints, or obstacles, that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
13 The public got what it wanted when this strategy was used.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
14 The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
15 The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
16 The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
17 The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
18 This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of the public.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
19 The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
20 The public was highly involved in the situation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
21 The public thought the situation was serious.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
22 My organization got what it wanted when this strategy was used.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Cooperative Problem Solving Strategy

Cooperative problem solving messages reflect a willingness to jointly define problems and solutions to problems. These messages are characterized by an open exchange of information to establish common goals and to share responsibilities about the situation. These messages create a sense of interdependence between an organization and its public and use inclusive language, such as "we."

My organization has frequently used this strategy.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

My organization has never used this strategy.

Now please remember a specific instance when your organization used this strategy and respond to statements about the target public using the scale provided. If you work for a public relations firm or advertising agency, recall a specific client that used this strategy and the client's target public. If your organization has never used this strategy, go to the demographic information section

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Undecided	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 My organization and the public had different goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2 When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for my organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3 The members of the public were personally affected by the situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4 The public recognized the existence of a problem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 The public was actively seeking information about the situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 The public wanted the same thing my organization wanted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7 The public could not solve the problem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8 Members of the public sought information from my organization about the situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9 When my organization used this strategy, the outcome was favorable for the public.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10 The members of the public consumed information given to them, but did not actively seek it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11 This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of my organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12 There were constraints, or obstacles, that limited the public's ability to make a difference in the situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13 The public got what it wanted when this strategy was used.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14 The goals of the public were compatible with the goals of my organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15 The members of the public seemed like they wanted to understand the situation better.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16 The public did not understand the situation enough to do anything about it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17 The members of the public had strong opinions about the situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18 This strategy was successful in achieving the goals of the public.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19 The public paid attention to messages from my organization when this strategy was used.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20 The public was highly involved in the situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21 The public thought the situation was serious.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22 My organization got what it wanted when this strategy was used.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Demographic Information

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Accredited in public relations: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Tenure in current position: Months ☐ Years

Total years of experience in public relations:

Which category best describes your current position?

- ☐ Entry Level / Technician
- ☐ Specialist / Coordinator / Assistant / Junior
- ☐ Supervisory / Director / Manager
- ☐ Senior Management
- ☐ Other

Which category best describes your current salary level?

- ☐ \$15,000 - \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,001 - \$30,000
- ☐ \$30,001 - \$50,000
- ☐ \$55,001 - \$76,000
- ☐ \$76,000 - and above
- ☐ Other

Which category best describes your highest level of education completed?

- ☐ MBA
- ☐ Other Graduate Degree
- ☐ Undergraduate Degree
- ☐ Incomplete Undergraduate Study
- ☐ High School Diploma

Which category best describes your organization sector? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Public Relations Firm/Advertising Agency
- ☐ Educational Institution
- ☐ Corporation
- ☐ Not for Profit
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Health & Welfare
- ☐ Association
- ☐ Other

[Submit Questionnaire](#)

[Reset Questionnaire](#)

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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



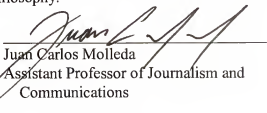
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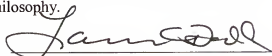
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